NEW

THE HISTORY OF DEMOCRACY

INSIDE
DISCOVER THE THREATS TO DEMOCRACY IN THE MODERN AGE

Explore the fascinating story of the political system that brought power to the people

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

FROM THE MAKERS OF ALL ABOUT HISTORY

Digital Edition
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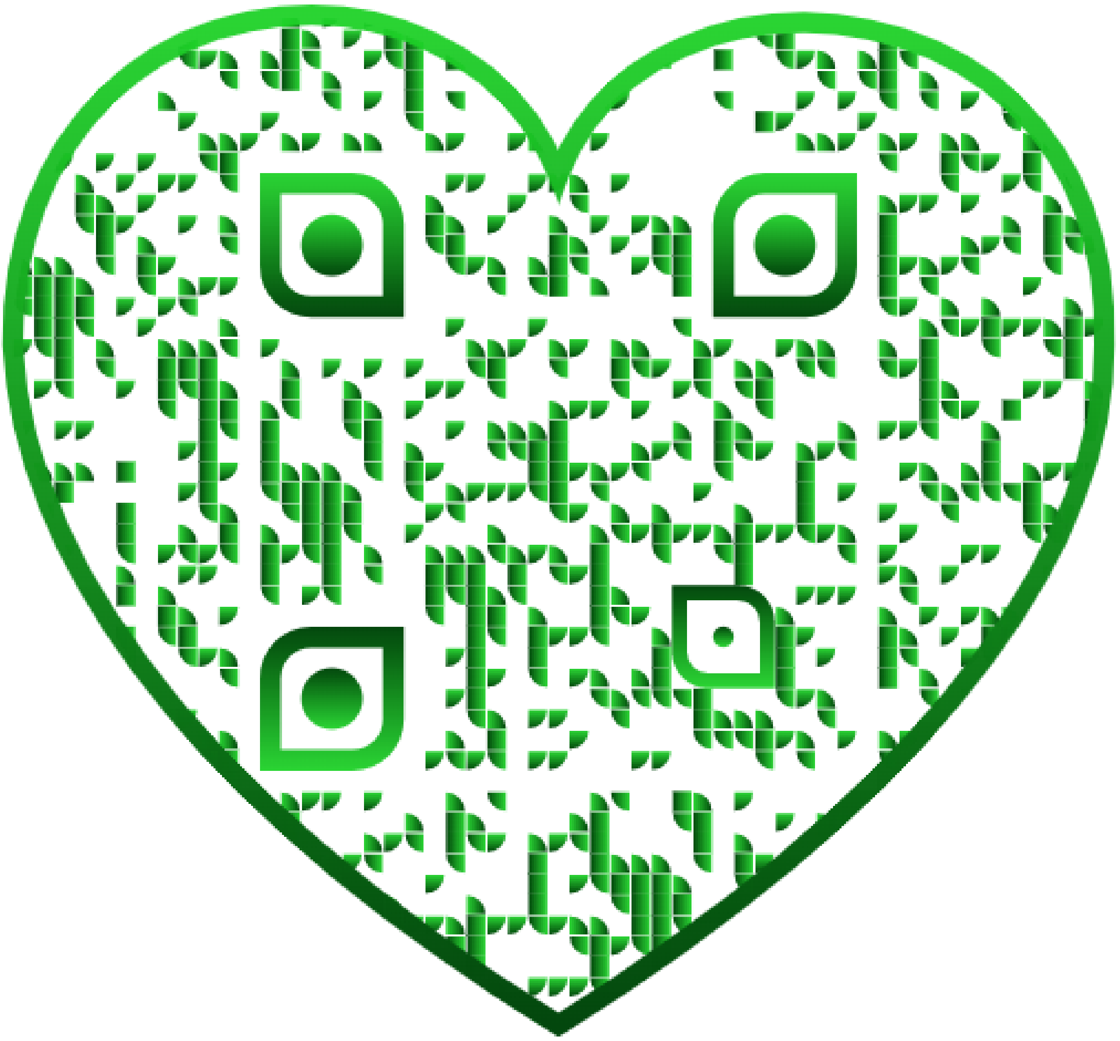
FUTURE

VOTE FOR JOBS, PEACE AND FREEDOM.
ANC

ANCIENT FOUNDATIONS ★ POLITICAL PIONEERS ★ DEFINING MOMENTS



WELCOME

Having a vote is something many of us take for granted today, but – in the grand scheme of things – this has been a relatively recent shift in the world order. At the turn of the 18th century, autocracy was the norm; the vast majority of people had no say and no influence on their leaders or the forces that governed their lives. Remarkably, in less than 250 years, people power has transformed nations and helped us make great strides towards freer and fairer societies.

While modern democracy as we know it today has proliferated in recent centuries, the concept has ancient roots and a long history of advancements, challenges and crises. See how democratic ideas emerged in ancient Athens – giving this form of government its name: 'demos' (people) and 'kratos' (power) – and chart the defining moments of fledgling democratic societies across millennia. From revolts and revolutions to suffrage movements, protests and referendums, discover how and why democracy has become such a powerful force for progress in the world today.

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FORMS OF GOVERNMENT

Discover the many faces of democracy, and the other political systems through which the world is ruled

Written by Dave Smith

In the relatively liberal West, we often assume that governments worldwide must operate under similar democratic principles to those of our own countries, with elected representatives, parliamentary debates and so on. This is far from the truth, with a whole range of different systems in place, ranging from absolute autocracy – in the form of one-party states, dictatorships and totalitarian regimes – to approaches based on participation and public debate. Furthermore, democracy itself is far from a single concept, with subtly varying and nuanced versions of the classical definition in evidence throughout the world.

With this in mind, let's take a look at some of the world's many different governing systems. After all, we can't understand how power – legal, executive and otherwise – is allocated, transferred, conserved and applied if we don't grasp the many structures in which it is contained.

DEMOCRACIES

Representative democracy

A system in which the public elects its own representatives through a regular voting process. The vast majority of Western democracies are built around this selection method.

Example: The United Kingdom, where Members of Parliament (MPs) are selected via public votes in 650 parliamentary constituencies.

Parliamentary democracy

A group of elected representatives form a parliament in this system, which then appoints a chief executive as head of government, who can be voted out of power – as distinct from a president, who cannot.

Example: Germany, where the Bundestag (elected representatives of the people) appoints a chancellor (the Bundeskanzler).

Presidential democracy

A presidential system differs from a parliamentary democracy in that the head of state is elected by the public, rather than being appointed by the legislature, and as such cannot usually be dismissed by said legislature.

Example: The United States, where the president heads up the executive branch, while the legal branch operates outside their remit.

Constitutional democracy

A democracy is said to be constitutional if it operates according to principles or policies recorded in a constitution, a document whose content is agreed by the country's public and/or legal branch.

Example: Switzerland, whose constitution defines the separation of its country into 26 states (cantons) and which was most recently updated in 2000.

Direct democracy

In this system, the population of a country, city, or other entity make their own decisions about policy without requiring a set of representatives to do this for them.

Example: The city-state of Athens circa 600 BCE operated a form of direct democracy; a more modern example is Liechtenstein. Many countries also have referendums, a closely-related concept.

Liberal democracy

Under this system, a government seeks to represent its electorate with relatively strong emphasis on openness, equality, accountability (checks and balances) and separation of powers, generally with more than one party available for election.

Example: Iceland, where coalition governments are seen as the norm and policies are often progressive in nature.

Social democracy

A major aspect of a social democracy is that it focuses on the needs of its citizens, creating a welfare system, for example. Note that democratic socialism, a related but not identical approach, places more emphasis on the goal of building a socialist society.

Example: South Africa, where governments have pursued this approach since 1994, with varying degrees of success.

Participatory democracy

This system allows a country's public, or a selection of them, to become directly involved in policy-making and government, with or without the presence of elected representatives.

Example: Ireland, where a Citizens' Assembly was formed in 2011 to involve the public in policy. Social media is also an arguable forum for participatory democracy.

Deliberative democracy

Any democracy that includes an element of debate, argument, discussion and weighing-up of multiple options (collectively, 'deliberation') by a gathering of people before action is taken can be said to be deliberative.

Example: Belgium's Citizens' Assembly has been deliberating on its country's policy since 2019 and has its own legislative powers.

Consociational democracy

If groups of citizens of differing ethnicity, religion or other values work together within a democracy to share political and legal power to the benefit of all participants, they have a consociational system.

Example: Between 1857 and 1967 the Netherlands divided powers between four groups – two religious, one political and one that was non-specific.

AUTOCRACIES

Absolute monarchy

When a monarch wields absolute power in their country, unconstrained by legal boundaries, they are the head of an absolute monarchy. These no longer exist in the West, apart from Vatican City and (arguably) Liechtenstein.

Example: Oman, where Sultan and Prime Minister Haitham bin Tariq possesses all legal powers.

Dictatorship

A system in which a single individual, or small group of individuals, retains all power is a dictatorship. We usually view such systems negatively, but the concept of a 'benevolent dictatorship' also exists, although examples of this are rare.

Example: Nazi Germany, which existed from 1933 to 1945, was led by its dictator Adolf Hitler and his coterie of ministers.

Totalitarian regime

Totalitarianism is the belief that society can and must be organised according to a single, perfect vision, and that a country's duty is to progress towards that point at all costs.

Example: North Korea, where the Kim dynasty of leaders enforces an isolationist, communism-based ideology of 'Juche' ('self-reliance').

Authoritarian regime

If a government controls its citizens with strict laws, inhibits their personal, political and other freedoms and uses police or military forces to subjugate them, it is an example of authoritarianism.

Example: Syria, where human rights abuses have been reported as among the world's worst.

Military junta

A junta (Spanish for 'council'), when formed of members of a country's armed forces, is referred to as a military junta. Such an organisation can either form a government or replace one, often using violence to do so.

Example: Burkina Faso, where the Patriotic Movement for Safeguard and Restoration has ruled since a coup d'état in 2022.

Theocracy

Theocratic government is the rule of a country by a god via their disciples, who execute the affairs of government according to the dogma of their religion.

Example: Afghanistan, which is ruled by the Taliban, who govern according to their interpretation of Islamic sharia law.

One-party state

A one-party state permits only a single party to take part in elections and to rule. Other parties are deemed illegal (or are sanctioned by the ruling party to play a supporting role), ensuring that governmental power is permanently retained by the same political group.

Example: China, where the Chinese Communist Party has ruled the country since 1949.

Hybrid regime

While in the process of moving from one end of the authoritarian-versus-liberal spectrum to the other, a hybrid state is a country that simply possesses elements of both systems.

Example: Brazil, which in recent years under President Bolsonaro, had been undergoing a process of autocratisation while retaining elements of liberal policy.

OTHER SYSTEMS

Oligarchy

Any system in which power is in the hands of a relatively small group of individuals can be described as an oligarchy. These oligarchs usually possess considerable wealth, whether inherited, stolen, awarded by their state or earned through capitalist endeavours.

Example: Russia, many of whose oligarchs made vast sums of money in the years immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union.

Aristocracy

If a class of rich, privileged individuals, often with inherited fortunes and – in countries with an honours system – honorific titles, rule a country, it is an aristocracy.

Example: The United Kingdom is partly an aristocracy due to the existence of the House of Lords, which can delay new laws from the Commons. Until its powers were reduced in 1911, the Lords could veto bills passed by the Commons.

Technocracy

If most or all of the members of a given government are trained, experienced or otherwise expert in fields such as science, engineering or information technology, that government can reasonably be described as a technocracy, but definitions vary.

Example: Almost 90 per cent of the government of the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev in 1986 was composed of engineers, including Brezhnev himself, whose background was in metallurgy.

Getty Images, Wikimedia Commons

THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY

How is democracy progressing today, and how has it evolved so far?

Written by Joel McIver

If you're interested in building an objective, accurate view of how trends in democracy change over time, there are certain obstacles to bear in mind. Obviously a simple internet search won't give you more than a vague picture. Worse, even deeper research is subject to the bias and agendas of anyone who creates, compiles and reveals the relevant information. What's more, even the way that democracy is defined varies widely.

Still, if an unbiased understanding of change in democracy's values and distribution is what you're after, the scholarly community Our World In Data recommends measuring tools such as the Varieties In Democracy (V-Dem) Project, the Lexical Index of Electoral Democracy, and Freedom House's Freedom In The World, all of which can be readily consulted. The criteria that these and other analytical bodies use to measure the democracy of a given country or regime tend to focus on the freedom of the electoral system, levels of governmental intervention in citizens' rights, as well as the freedom of the domestic press to investigate and comment.

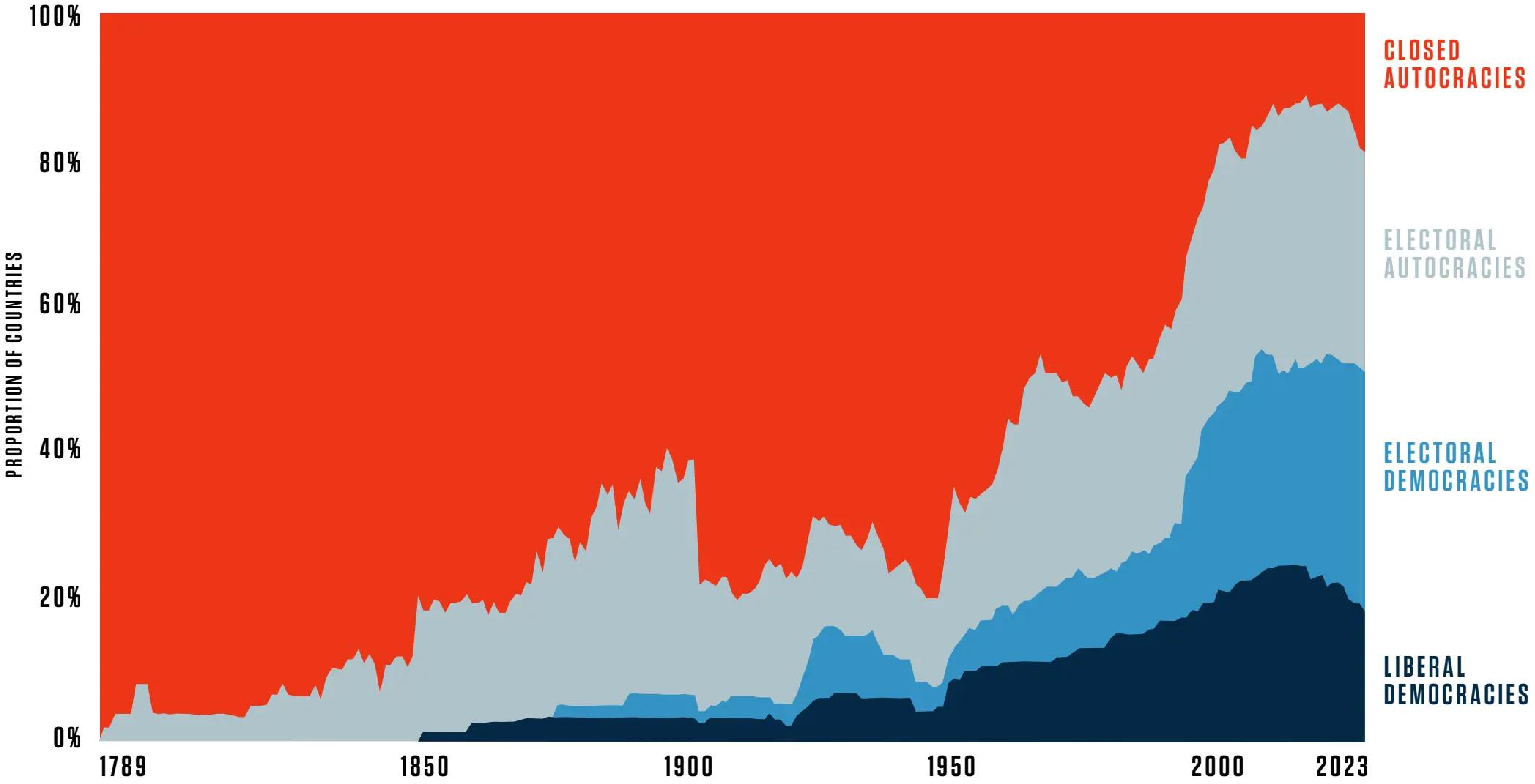
These measurement agencies provide a fascinating, if also sobering, portrait of today's world. Did you know that as recently as 200 years ago almost no one lived in a liberal democracy? And did you know that today, the planet can be split more or less equally into democracies and autocracies? Most of us assume that the world is a free place apart from a small number of unstable authoritarian regimes in the Middle and Far East, but we're completely wrong in this.

Fortunately, the bigger picture is that the world has become far more democratic since 1789, a common starting point for this kind of analysis. Closed autocracies, which did not permit elections by the public, were the norm at that time, but many of them evolved into electoral autocracies as the 19th century progressed. Their elections weren't necessarily free or fair, but at least they existed, and the process of democratisation had begun: the first truly liberal democracies came into being by the 20th century.

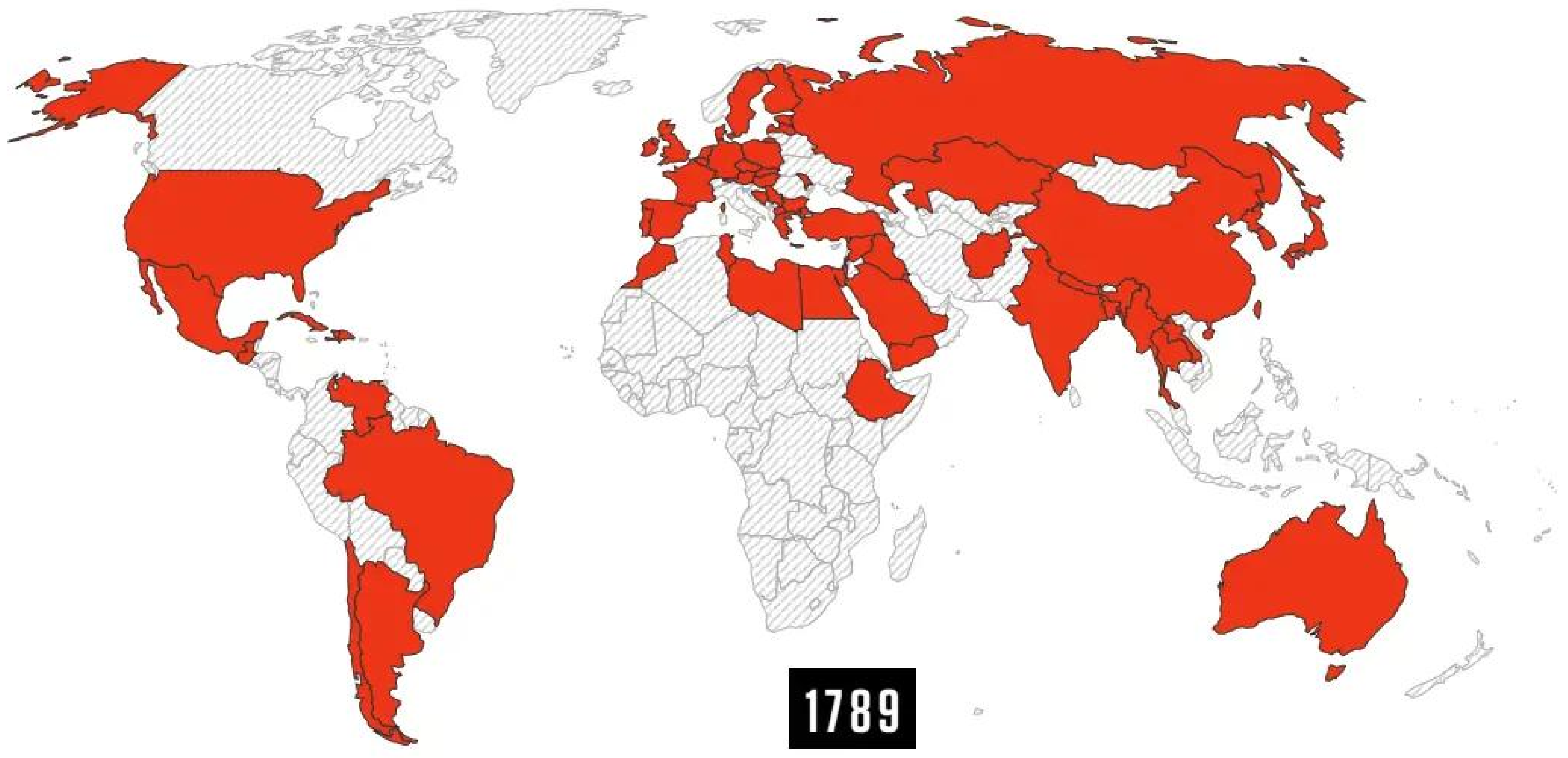
In the first quarter of the current century, there has been a minor but noticeable decline in global democratic performance, with as many as half of the countries surveyed tending towards autocratising in at least one criterion, a process known as 'democratic backsliding'. From 2022 to 2024, V-Dem and other agencies listed 42 countries in this respect, including Russia, Belarus, Hungary, Romania, India, Turkey and the United States, where in total as many as 35 per cent of the global population reside. These declines were seen "in representation and rule of law in every region of the world," wrote **Idea.int**. Conversely, there have been improvements noted worldwide in the specific area of corruption within governments and other powerful agencies.

So can it be said that the slow rise of liberal democracy has been a good thing? Of course, and not simply because no one wants to see authoritarian tactics used on the public by totalitarian regimes. There is also a practical element to them, as Our World In Data concludes: "Democratic countries seem better governed than autocracies, seem to grow faster, and foster more peaceful conduct within and between them".

DEMOCRACIES VS AUTOCRACIES, 1789-PRESENT*



GLOBAL POLITICAL REGIMES, 1789-PRESENT*



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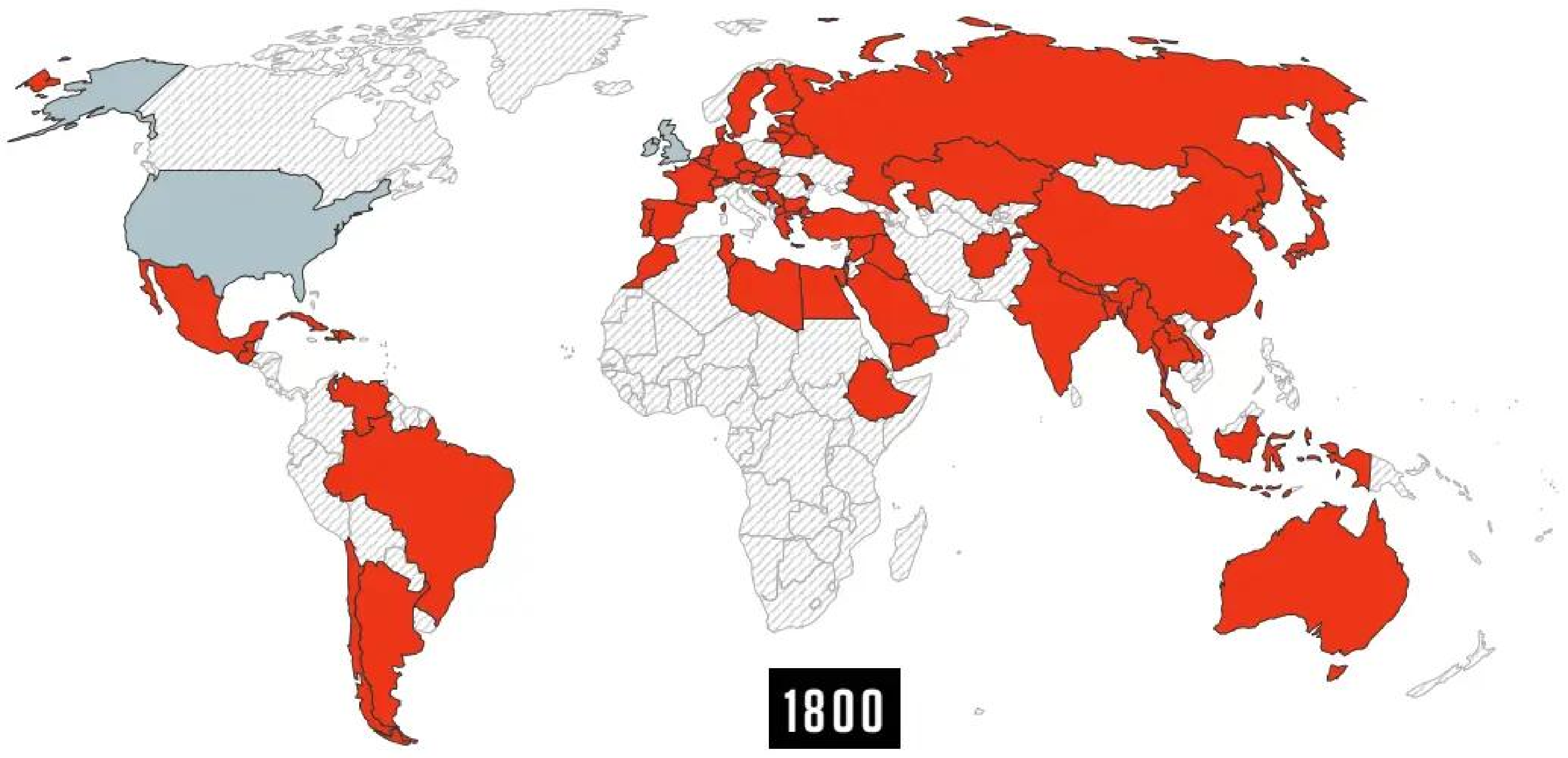

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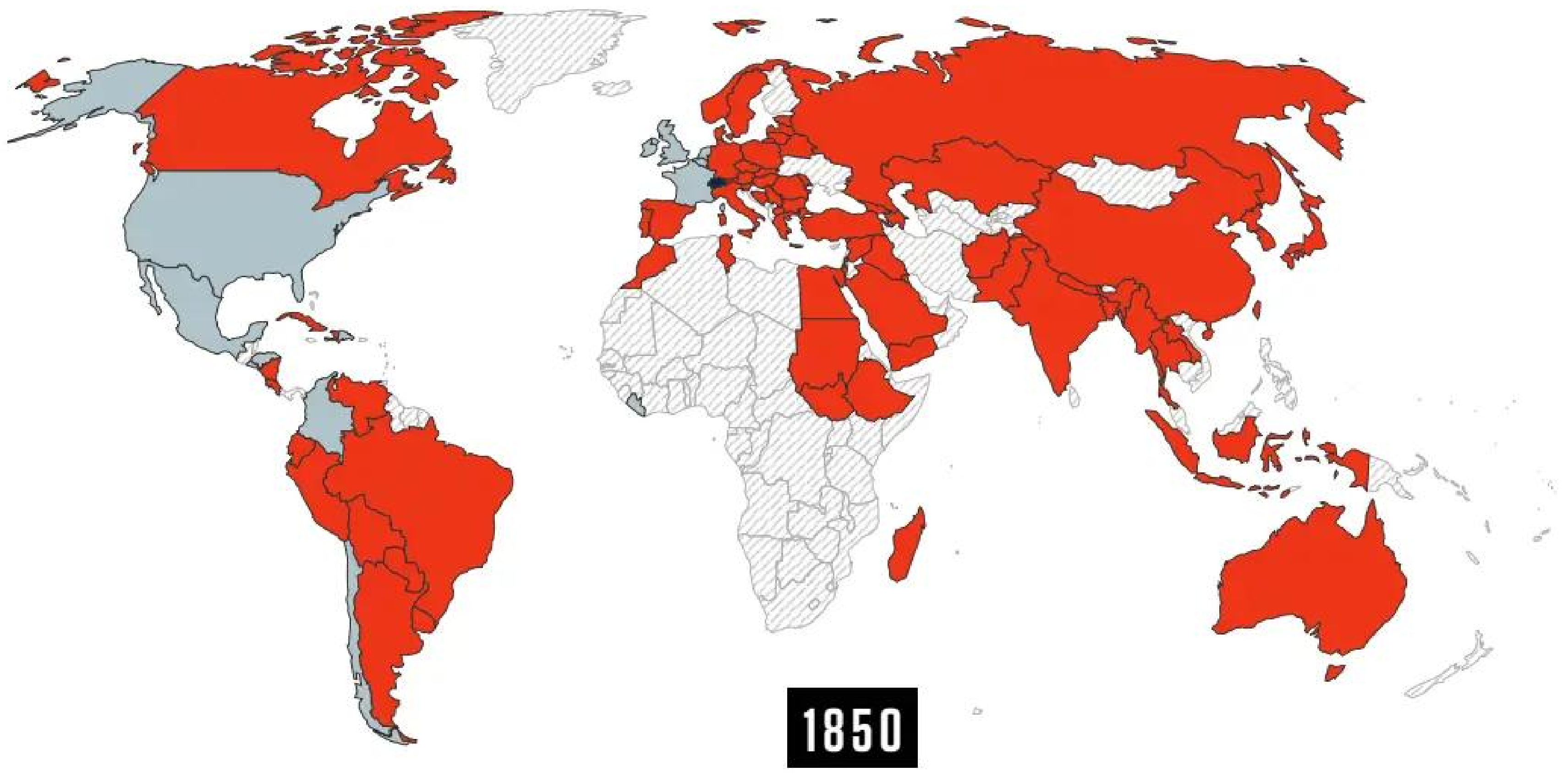

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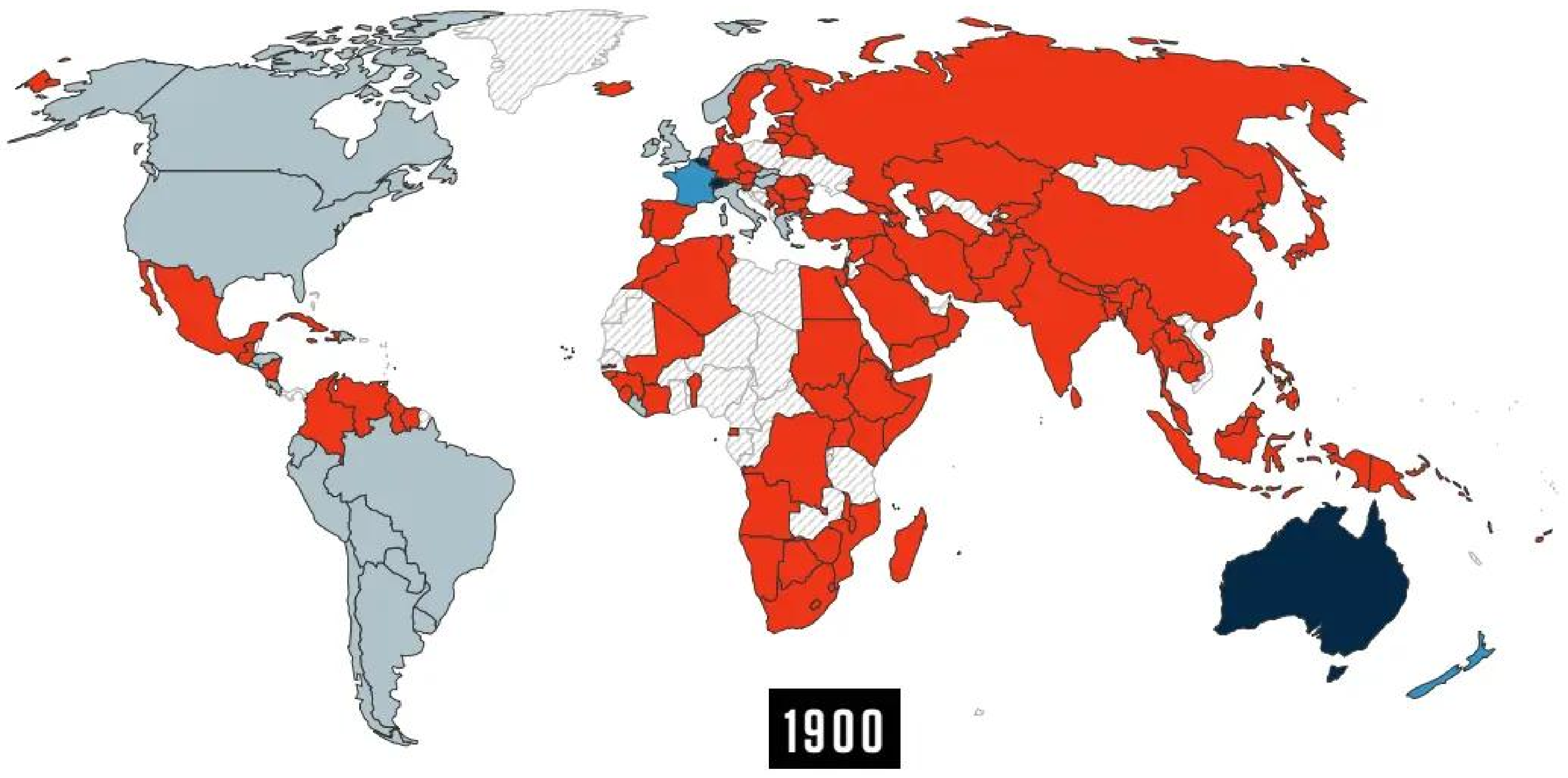

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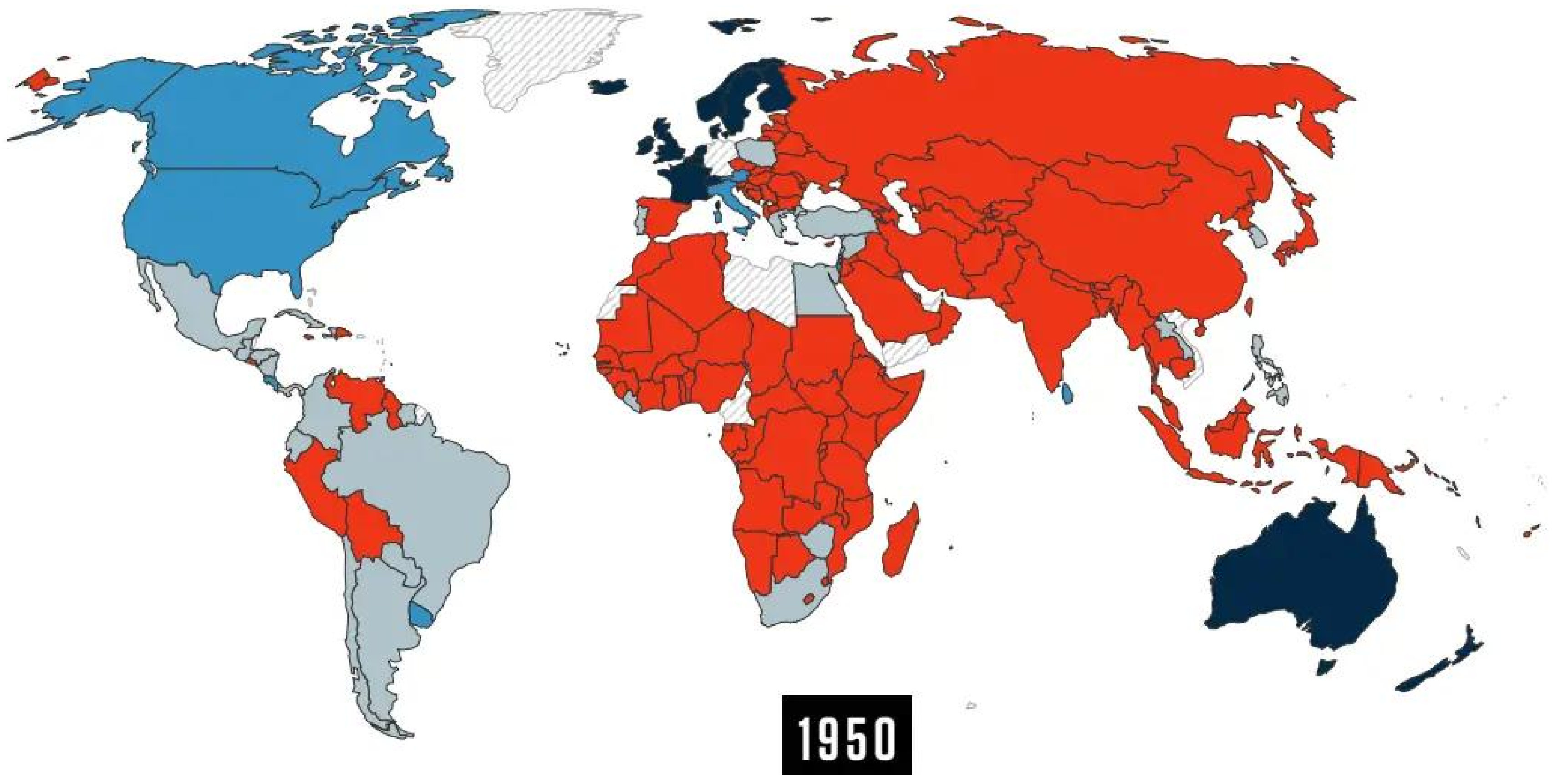

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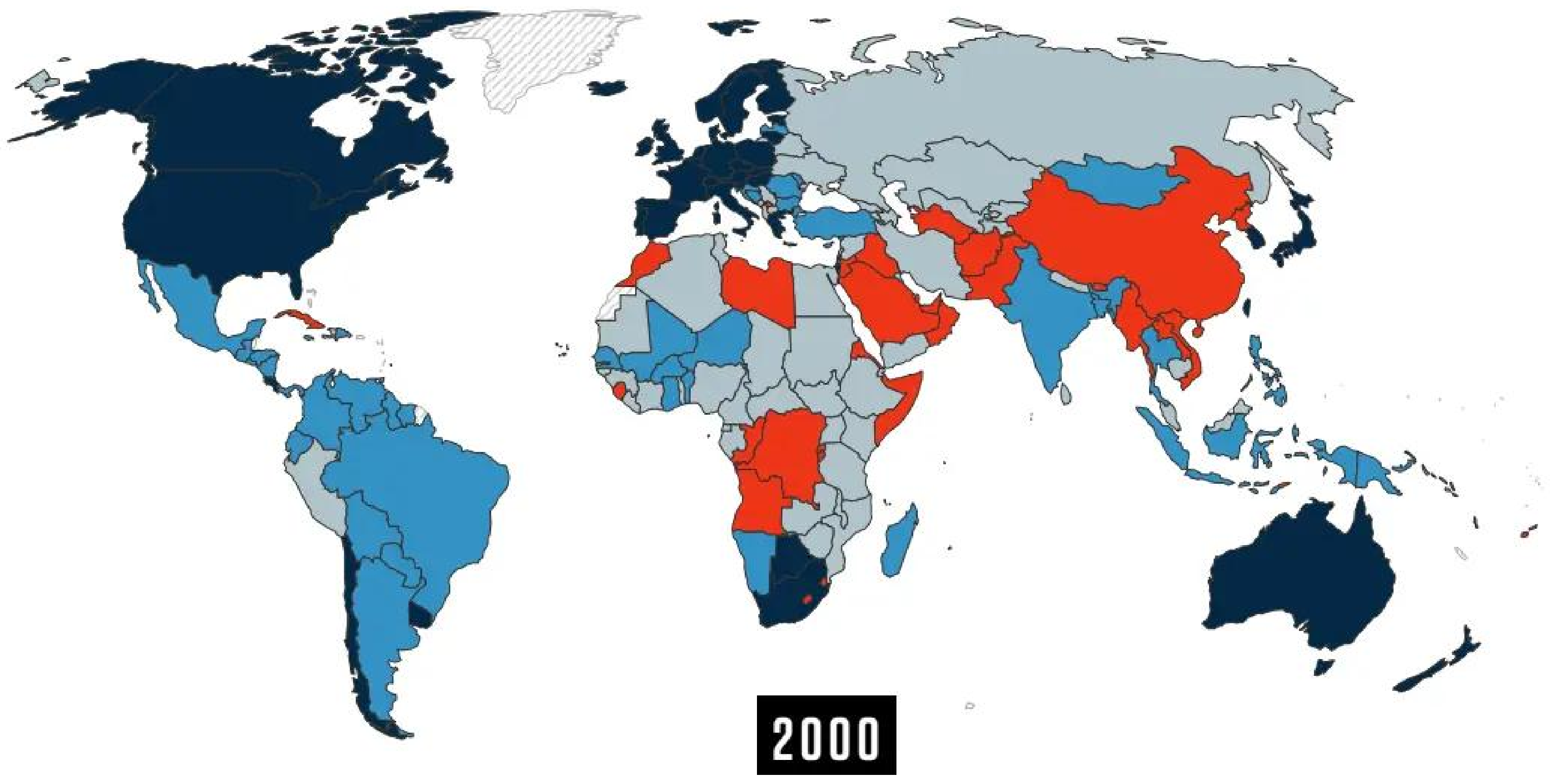

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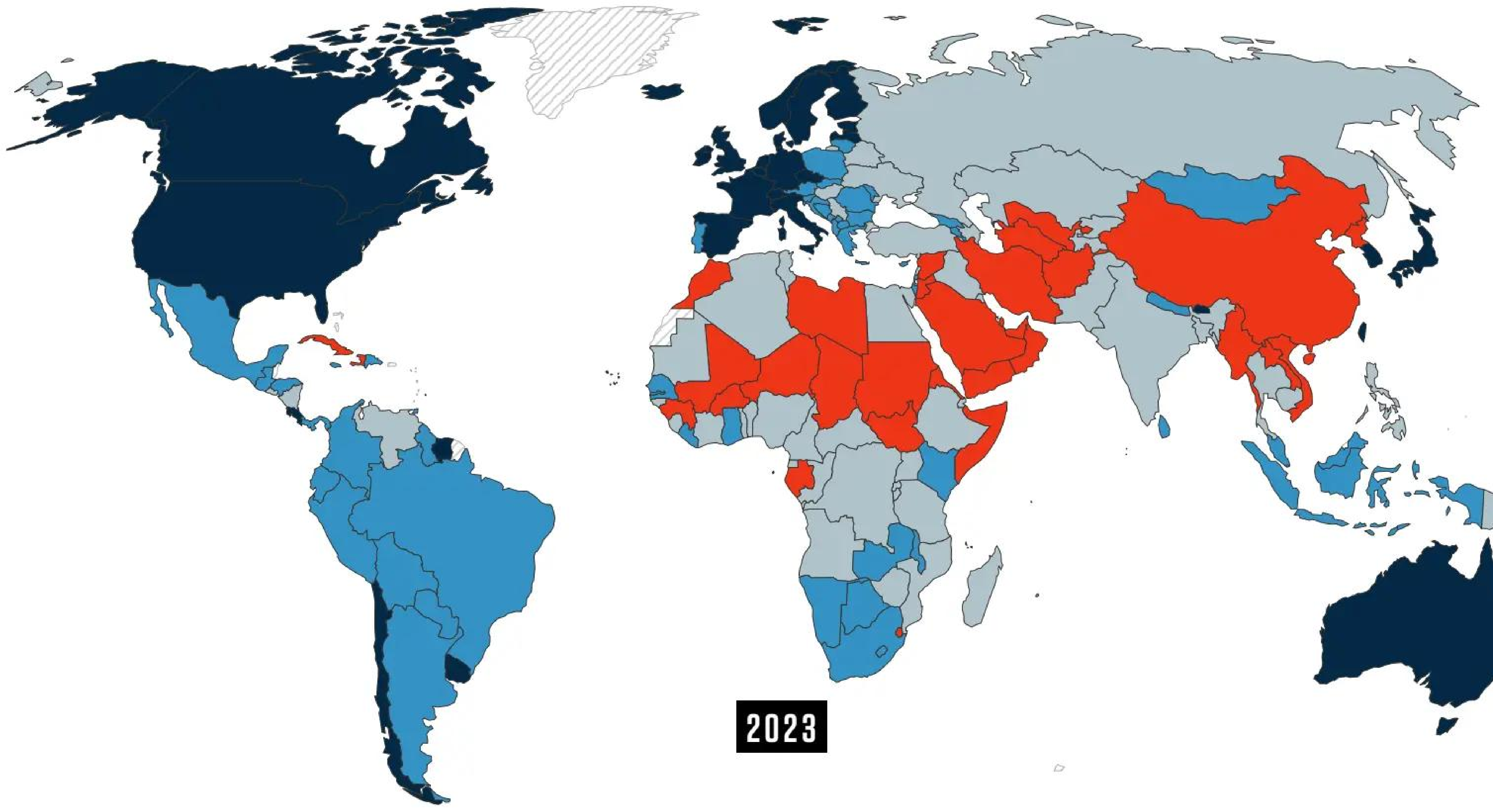

2023

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Data source: V-Dem (2024).
*Political regimes are based on the classification by Lührmann et al. (2018) and the estimates by V-Dem's experts.

- 🟥 CLOSED AUTOCRACIES
- ⬜ ELECTORAL AUTOCRACIES
- 🟦 ELECTORAL DEMOCRACIES
- ⬛ LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES

Our World in Data (CC BY 4.0)

DEMOCRACY IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

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Timeline
Explore the ancient milestones in the history of democracy

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Ancient Greece
Discover how the foundations of democracy were laid in Athens over 2,500 years ago

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The rise & fall of the Roman Republic
Before the age of empire, Rome was ruled by a more democratic system of government

Getty Images

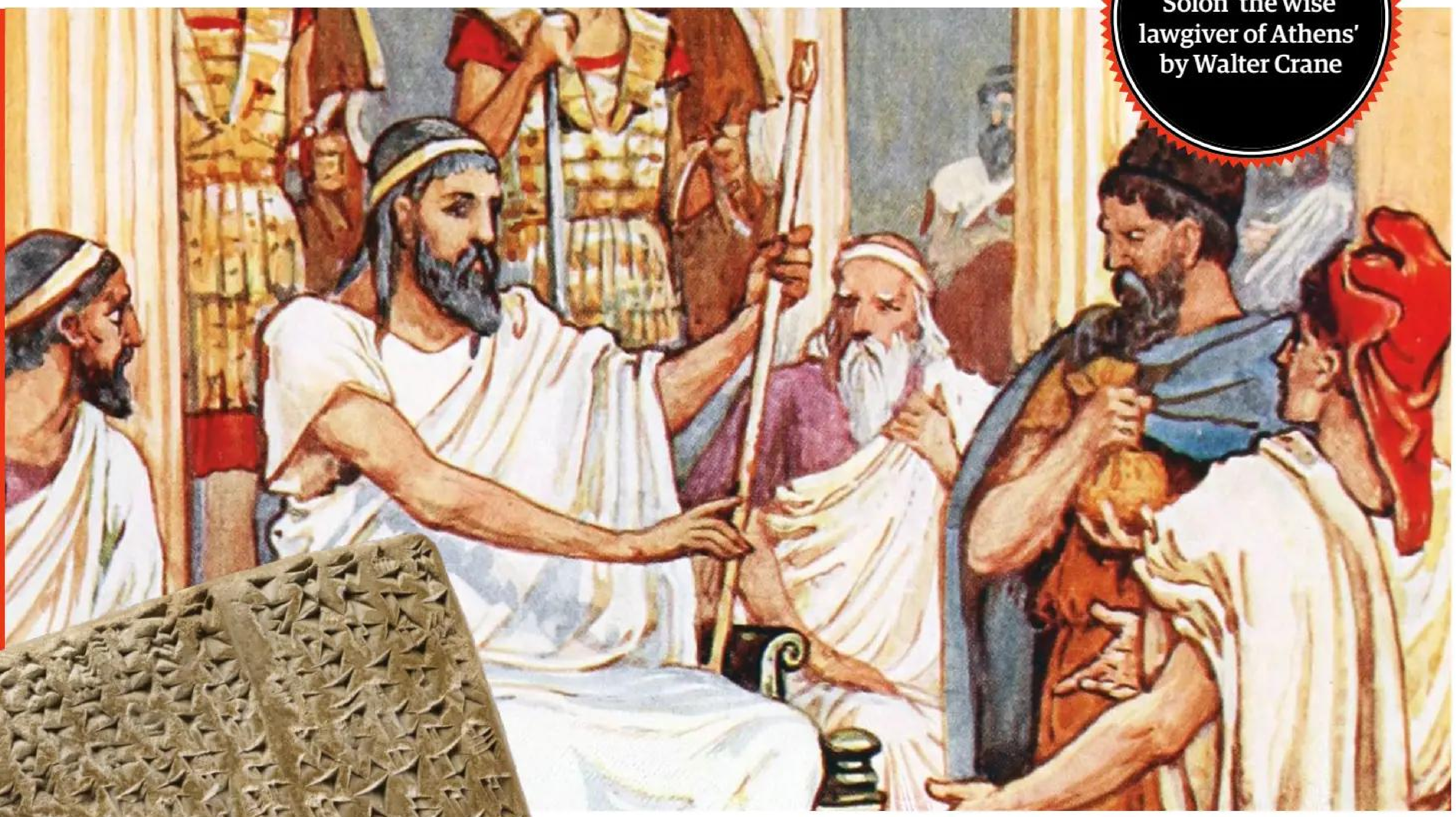
DEMOCRACY THROUGH HISTORY: ANCIENT MILESTONES

Written by Ben Gazur

594 BCE SOLON'S REFORMS

ATHENS

In the 6th century BCE, the people of Athens began to rebel against a social system they felt was unfair. The poorest citizens were oppressed and many were deeply indebted, with large numbers being sold into slavery due to poverty. To prevent a civil war, the politician Solon was invited to create a new constitution for the city. His reforms divided the populace into classes based on wealth. Those with the most wealth were eligible to be elected as officials and magistrates, while even the poorest male citizens could vote in elections and on laws that were to be enacted.



A depiction of Solon 'the wise lawgiver of Athens' by Walter Crane

PROTO-DEMOCRACIES

14TH CENTURY BCE

The Amarna letters discovered in Egypt include diplomatic letters from Syrian cities that hint at assemblies of citizens holding power. Instead of being sent by kings they are addressed "From the men of [city]".

TRIBAL ASSEMBLIES

6TH CENTURY BCE

In several Indian states, rulers governed alongside gana sanghas, assemblies of men who discussed key matters and decided questions of justice and finance. Membership could be just the heads of important families or all men.

594 BCE

509 BCE

508 BCE

4TH C BCE

SPARTAN DEMOCRACY

9TH – 6TH CENTURY BCE

Sparta was ruled by two kings but were overseen by a council of men over 60 years old, the gerousia, and officials called ephors, who were elected by an assembly of all male citizens.

GREEK EXPERIMENTS

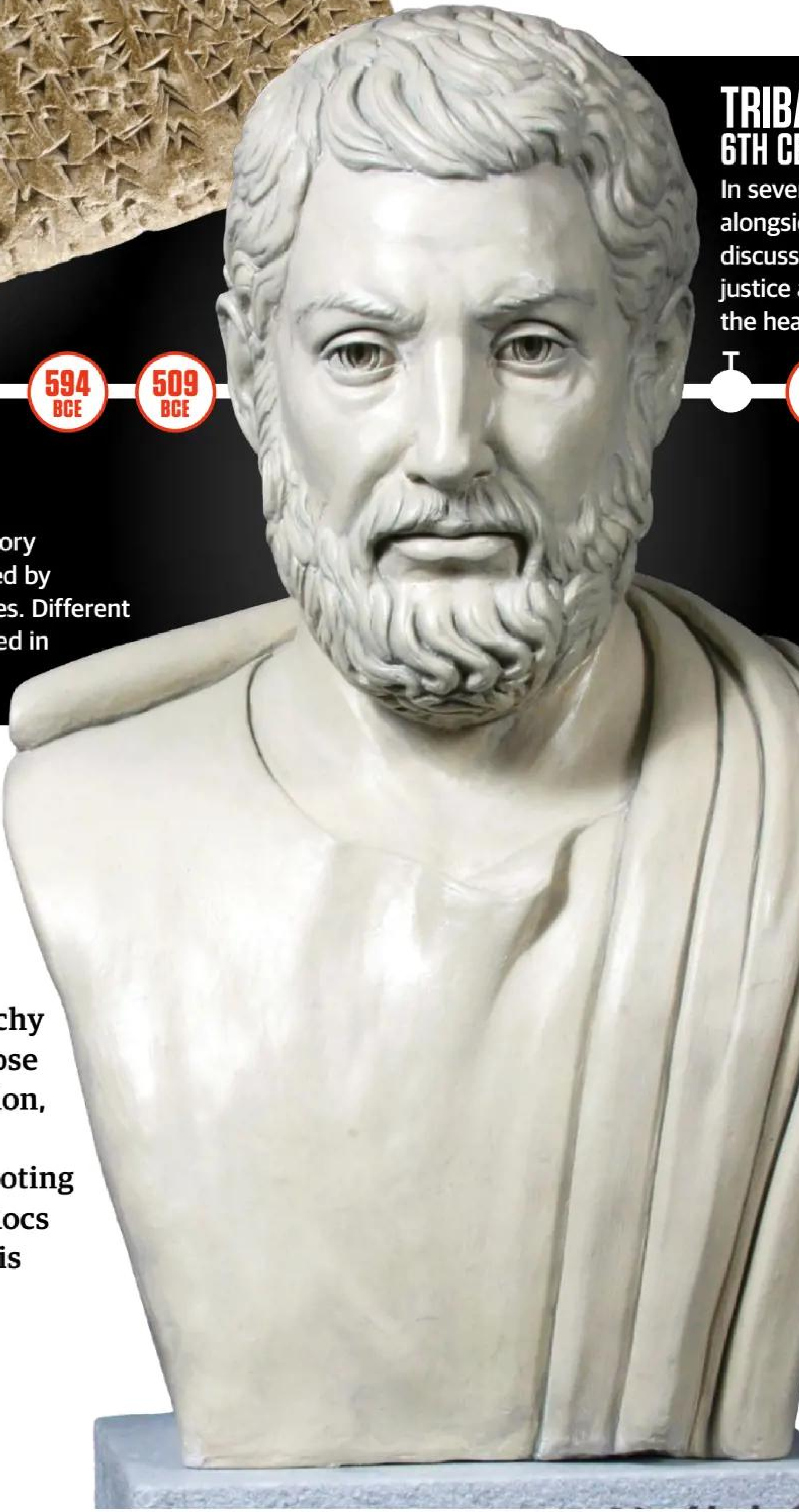
7TH CENTURY BCE

In the Archaic period of Greek history the many city-states were governed by oligarchies, tyrants, and monarchies. Different levels of citizen participation existed in different cities at different times.

CAST OUT

5TH CENTURY BCE

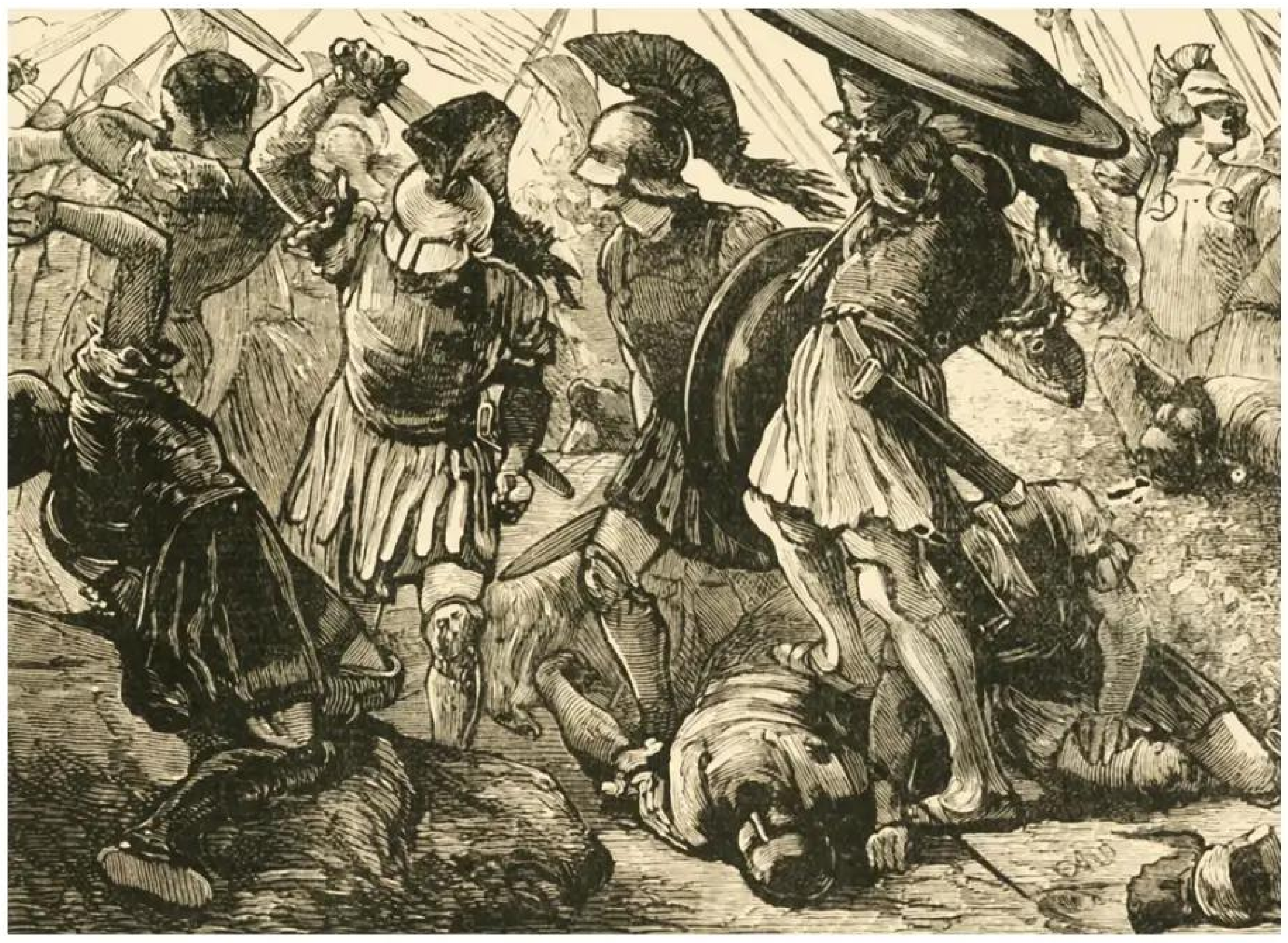
Each year the Athenians could vote to ostracise a person from the city (below). Whoever received the most votes in the assembly was exiled for a period of ten years.



508 BCE ATHENIAN REVOLUTION

ATHENS

Soon after the reforms of Solon, the tyrant Peisistratos seized power in Athens, followed by his son Hippias. In 510 BCE, the Spartans invaded Athens and drove Hippias out, leaving an aristocratic oligarchy in control. When the oligarchy attempted to suppress democratic institutions, the people rose up and ordered Cleisthenes (right) to create a new constitution, an event known as the Athenian Revolution. Cleisthenes renewed the power of the elected council and reorganised voting areas to reduce aristocratic influence and break up voting blocs that might work against the good of all citizens. For this he is known as the 'Father of Athenian Democracy'.



ATHENS FALLS

4TH C. BCE

ATHENS

The Classical Era of Athens, which saw the creation of stunning artworks and influential literature, occurred under democratic rule. This golden period came to an end in the years following the military successes of Philip II of Macedon, around 338 BCE, when he defeated a combined force of Athenians and Thebans at the Battle of Chaeronea. Philip II established himself as the leader, or hegemon, of the city-states of Greece. Cities, including Athens, could no longer defy the Macedonian king without threat of destruction. Under Alexander the Great and his successors, the Athenians remained under close control.

UN-FREE ELECTIONS

31 BCE

ROME

The territorial expansion of the Roman Republic in the 1st century BCE put strain on the traditional representative democratic system with its annual elections. In 31 BCE, Octavian defeated Mark Antony in a civil war and became the single most influential person in the Republic. The Romans would not tolerate a king, so Octavian ostentatiously returned control of the state to the Senate in 27 BCE – but the Senate insisted on him retaining many powers. Without the support of Octavian, renamed Augustus, no one could get elected. The democratic forms were maintained as a fig leaf to cover the true autocratic nature of Augustus's rule. Local elections in town councils continued throughout the Empire.

Octavian, Caesar's adopted heir, became the founder of the Roman Empire

PLEBS ON STRIKE

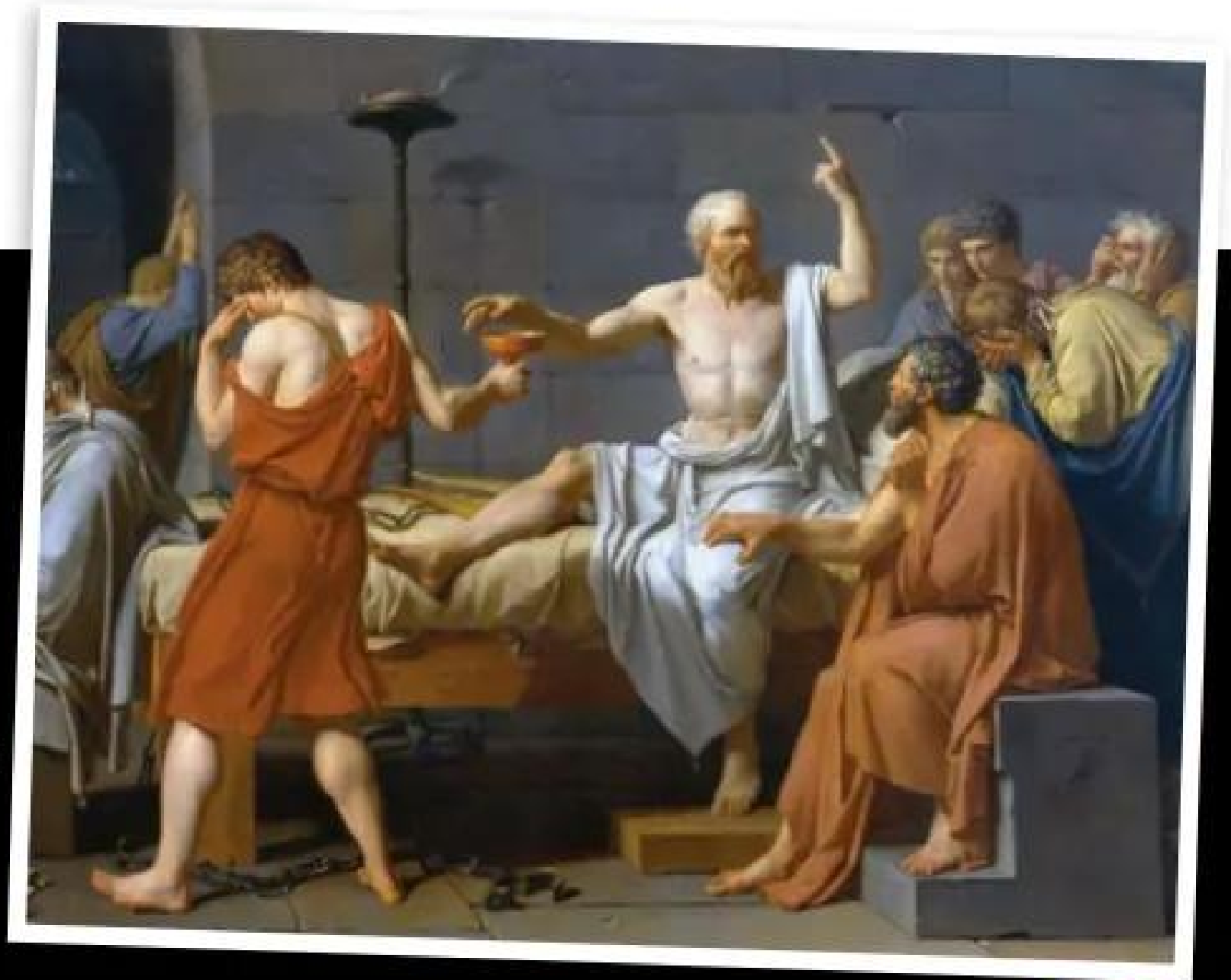
~493 BCE

When the Senate failed to listen to the complaints of the plebeians, the poor citizens of Rome abandoned the city. Only after being granted new rights did the plebeians return.

ANTI-DEMOCRATS

4TH CENTURY BCE

Plato had witnessed his teacher Socrates sentenced to death by a jury of citizens (right), and considered democracy the worst form of government. His writings inspired many later thinkers to distrust democracy.



UNPOPULAR POPULIST

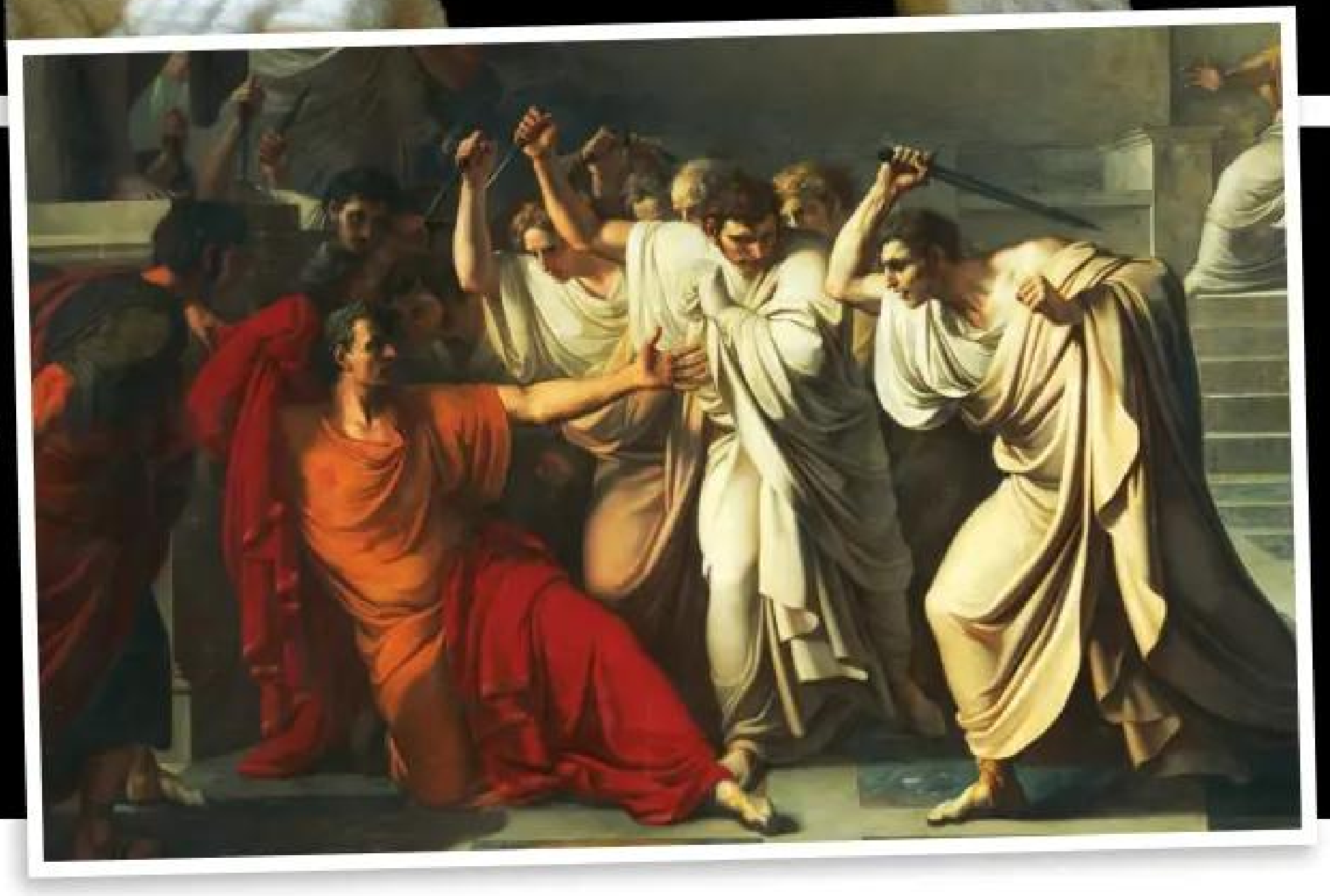
133 BCE

Tiberius Gracchus attempted to reform land ownership by redistributing farmland to poor people through unconstitutional elections. The senators who opposed this and their supporters beat Gracchus to death with clubs.

DICTATOR

49 BCE

In times of war the Romans could appoint a dictator with sole control of the state. In 49 BCE Julius Caesar was declared dictator for life – until assassinated by senators to restore the Republic (right).



31 BCE

LAST CONSUL

534 CE

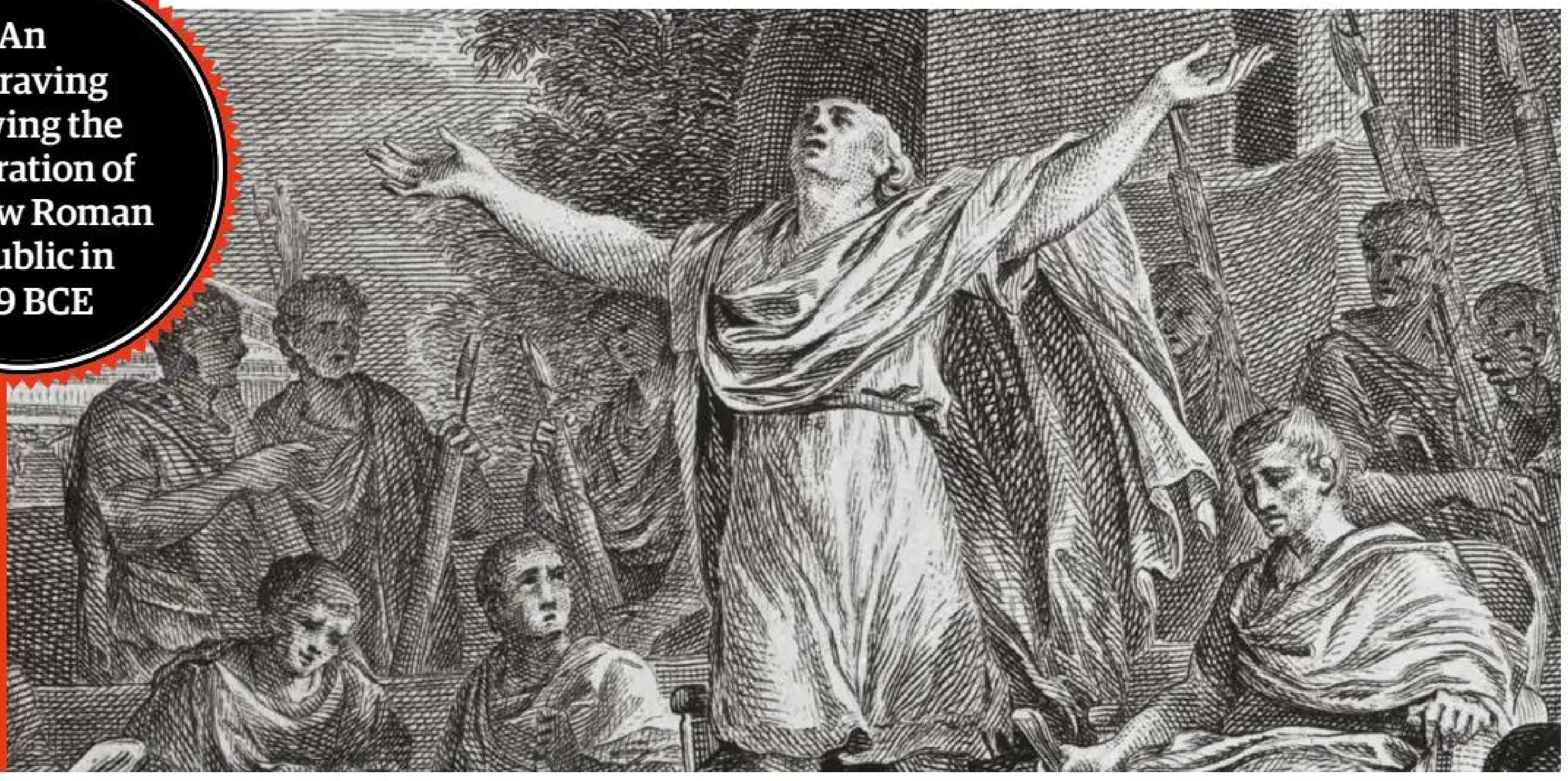
The last consul of Rome was Decius Paulinus, who was appointed by the Ostrogothic king Alatharic, who ruled Italy at the time. The consulship was allowed to lapse after this.

THE ROMAN REPUBLIC RISES

509 BCE

ROME

According to tradition, the last Roman king was ejected from the city in 509 BCE and a Republic was declared that was designed to stop total power ever falling into one person's hands. Each year two consuls were elected as chief magistrates and each could veto the actions of the other. A deliberative body called the Senate was created from officials who had been elected by the public. All male Roman citizens had the right to vote, though some positions in the early Republic could only be held by members of the elite Patrician class.



An engraving showing the declaration of the new Roman Republic in 509 BCE

Getty Images, Alamy

HOW DEMOCRACY WAS BORN

The city-state of Athens brought the foundations of democracy to the world in the 5th century BCE

Written by Michael Haskew

The origins of democratic government have long been attributed to Ancient Greece, and the city-state of Athens is seen as its cradle. While Athens did indeed produce a functioning democratic process, it was not alone among the city-states in developing the elements of democracy. However, Athenian democracy proved to be the most enduring among the ancients, and its history is well documented in comparison to the others.

Even as Athens reached the height of its power and prestige, the seeds of democracy were being sown. In the early 6th century, Solon initiated government reforms that enhanced the participation of the citizenry. Around 508 BCE, Cleisthenes presided over a flourishing democracy, and in the mid-5th century BCE, Ephialtes introduced reforms that further altered and refined the operation of the Athenian government. The first known functioning democracy came into being in the city of Athens, and those other city-states that initiated democratic institutions were likely to have emulated the evolving Athenian model.

The Athenian version was a direct democracy, as those eligible to participate cast their votes directly in matters of law and justice. The process extended beyond Athens proper and into the Attic peninsula; however, all inhabitants of the city and its environs were not full participants in the democratic process. The population of greater Athens is estimated to have been around 250,000 or more during the 5th century BCE, and included slaves and non-Athenian residents.

The first test for participation in the democracy was proof of citizenship. Men who were over 18 years of age were required to attest that they were not slaves and that their parents were born in Athens. Women were excluded. Only roughly 30,000 to 50,000 residents were eligible, and scholars assert that the number never surpassed more than 30 per cent of the city-state's population.

Democracy is derived from the Greek words 'demos' (people) and 'kratos' (power) and is literally translated as 'people power'

The emergence of Athenian democracy was preceded by other forms of government that existed at one time or another for at least 300 years after the founding of the city-state, or polis, around 900 BCE. The earliest government in the polis was a monarchy. A king, surrounded by a close group of noble advisors, ruled for about 100 years. Prosperity, however, brought the demise of the monarchy. Men who owned property and gained some measure of wealth through trade and commerce began to desire a voice in their own government.

These newly influential noblemen began to convene on the Areopagus, a hill near the city, and took their name from it. The Areopagus developed into a body that asserted political power and elected nine 'rulers,' known as Archons, to govern the city-state in an oligarchy. The Archons did not exercise absolute power. Their decisions were subject to the approval of the Areopagus.

In this 19th century painting, Pericles delivers his famous funeral oration to the ekklesia. The Acropolis towers in the background

Alamy

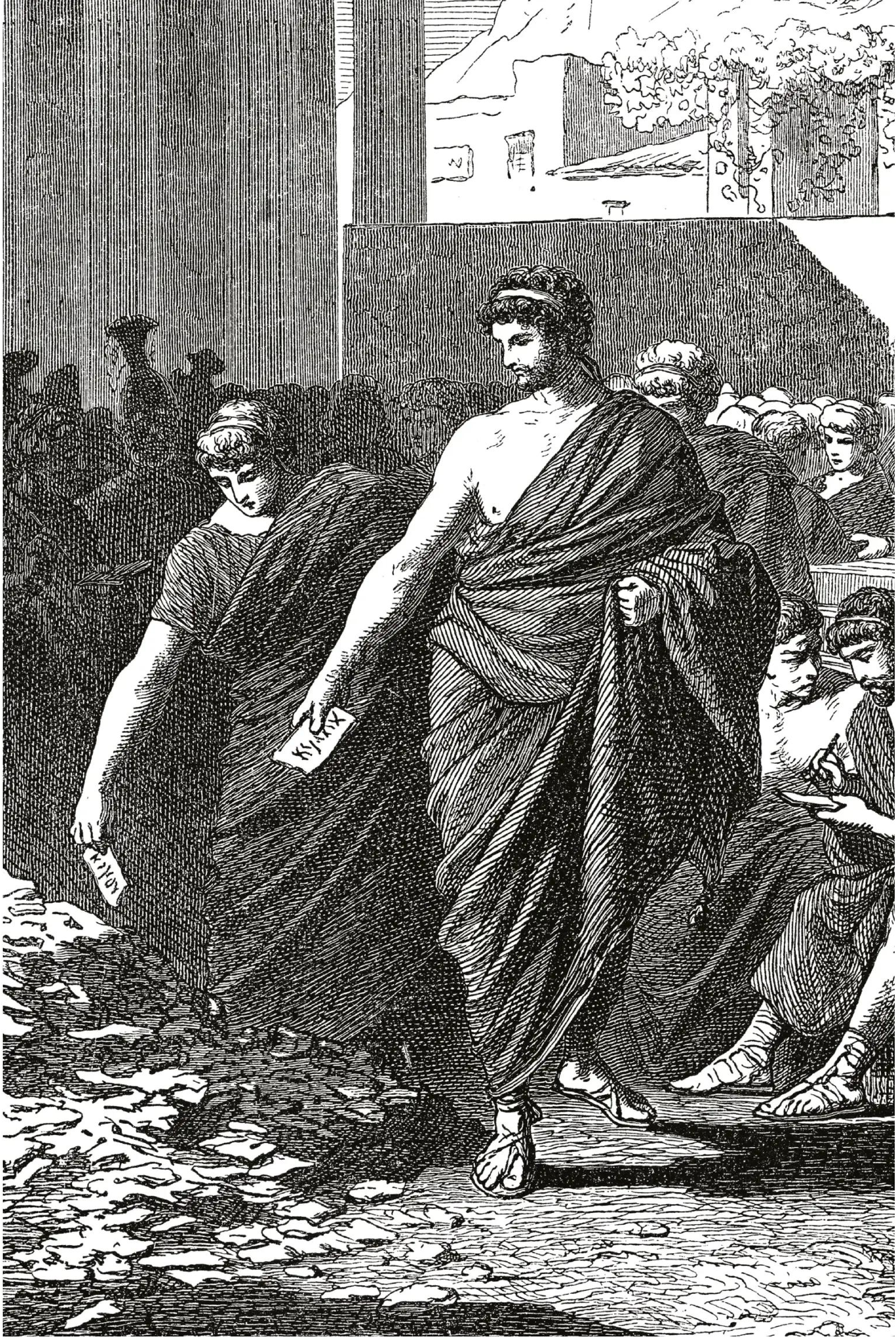
By the mid-7th century, a social class structure had become well defined. The wealthy, aristocratic ruling class, including members of the Areopagus, fell into disfavour as workers and members of lower classes resented their continuing affluence, which was often maintained at the expense of those less fortunate. Greek society devolved into civil unrest, and amid the chaos assertive men came forward, promising to restore order. Often with the support of the people, these so-called 'tyrants' claimed power in a radical departure from traditional forms of accession, such as wealth or family bloodlines.

SOLON SOWS SEEDS

In 594 BCE, Solon, a statesman, poet, and archon, was elevated to rule in Athens. During difficult economic times, many Athenians had been forced to seek financial support from the aristocratic class. In exchange for loans, they were compelled to mortgage their lands and even offer themselves and family members as collateral. Often enough, such practices resulted in burdensome debt that could not be retired. Farmers and merchants found themselves enslaved to the wealthy. A financial crisis loomed, particularly as farmers lost the use of their lands, and economic collapse threatened the foundation of Athenian prosperity.

Solon set about redressing the inequity of a social structure based on wealth alone. He developed a constitution that divided Athenian society into four classes based on financial capacity and allowing members of the top three classes to serve as archons. Every Athenian was accorded the right to appeal a legal decision to a jury, reducing the power of the nine archons in such matters in favour of a larger, more equitable body. Solon then ended the custom of loans secured by an individual's freedom.

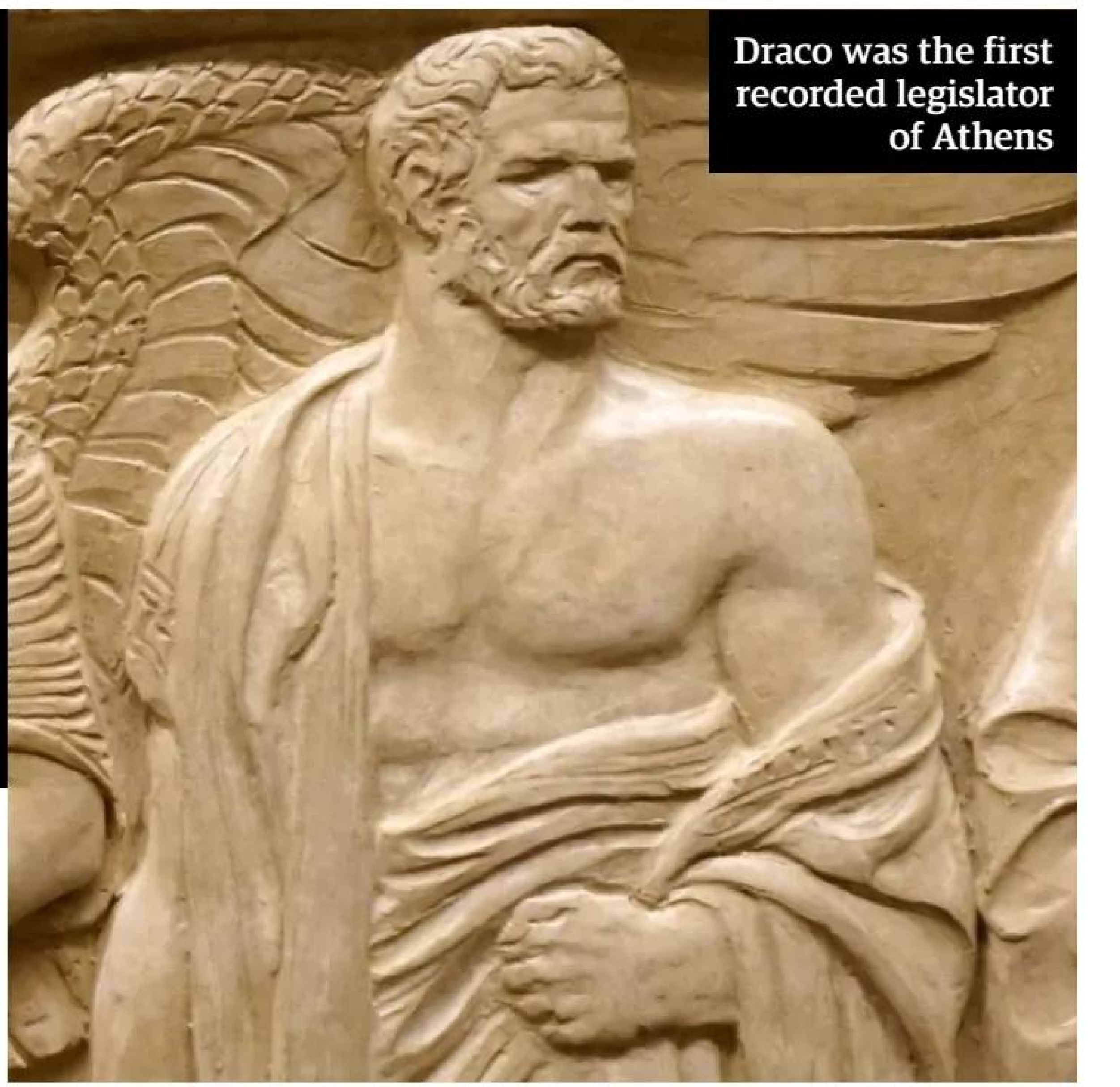
Prior to Solon's reforms, the council of the Areopagus, former archons themselves, had elected nine new archons each year. Therefore, only aristocrats were elected to the body. Solon's constitution provided that all Athenian citizens should vote for a slate of candidates for the position of archon. From among these candidates, nine individuals were then selected by lot. Under the constitution of Solon, the Areopagus was charged as the guardian of the law and a council of 400 citizens formed a more representative



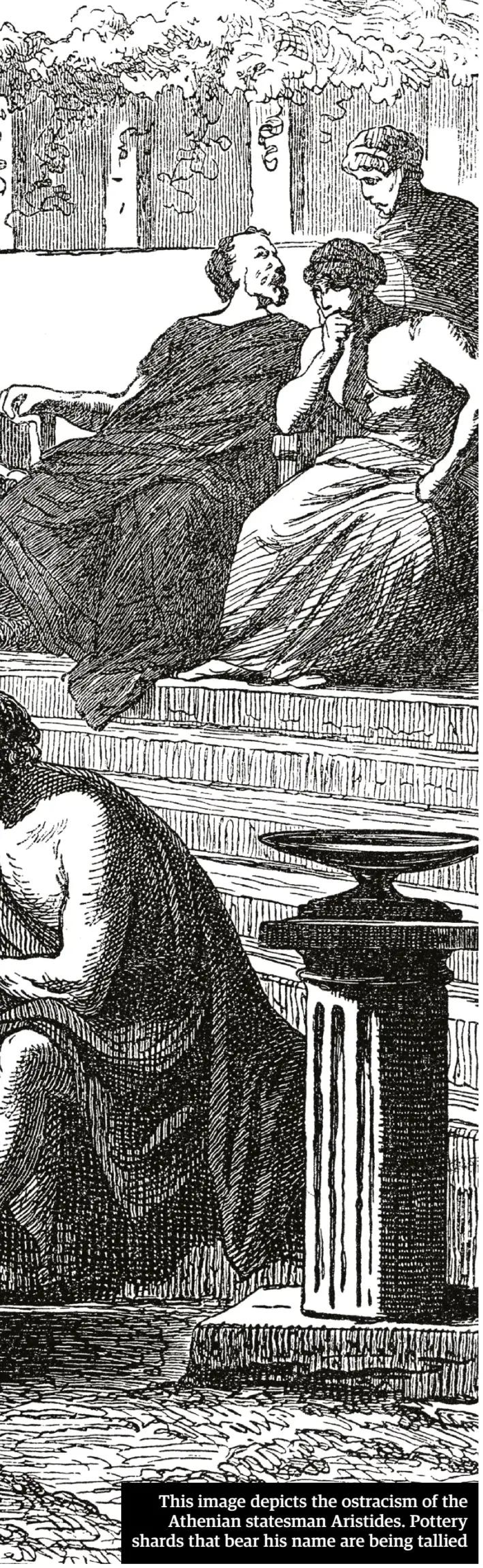
THE LAWS OF DRACO

Around 621 BCE, Draco, the first recorded legislator of Ancient Greece, is believed to have introduced a written legal code. The written code replaced a system of oral and tribal law with one that was more uniform and intended for interpretation by a court of law. The code itself is remembered as quite harsh, and it is from the author's name that the modern word 'draconian' is derived. Little is known of Draco's life, although he is believed to have been a member of the nobility from the region of Attica. He was born around 650 BCE and died at the age of approximately 50.

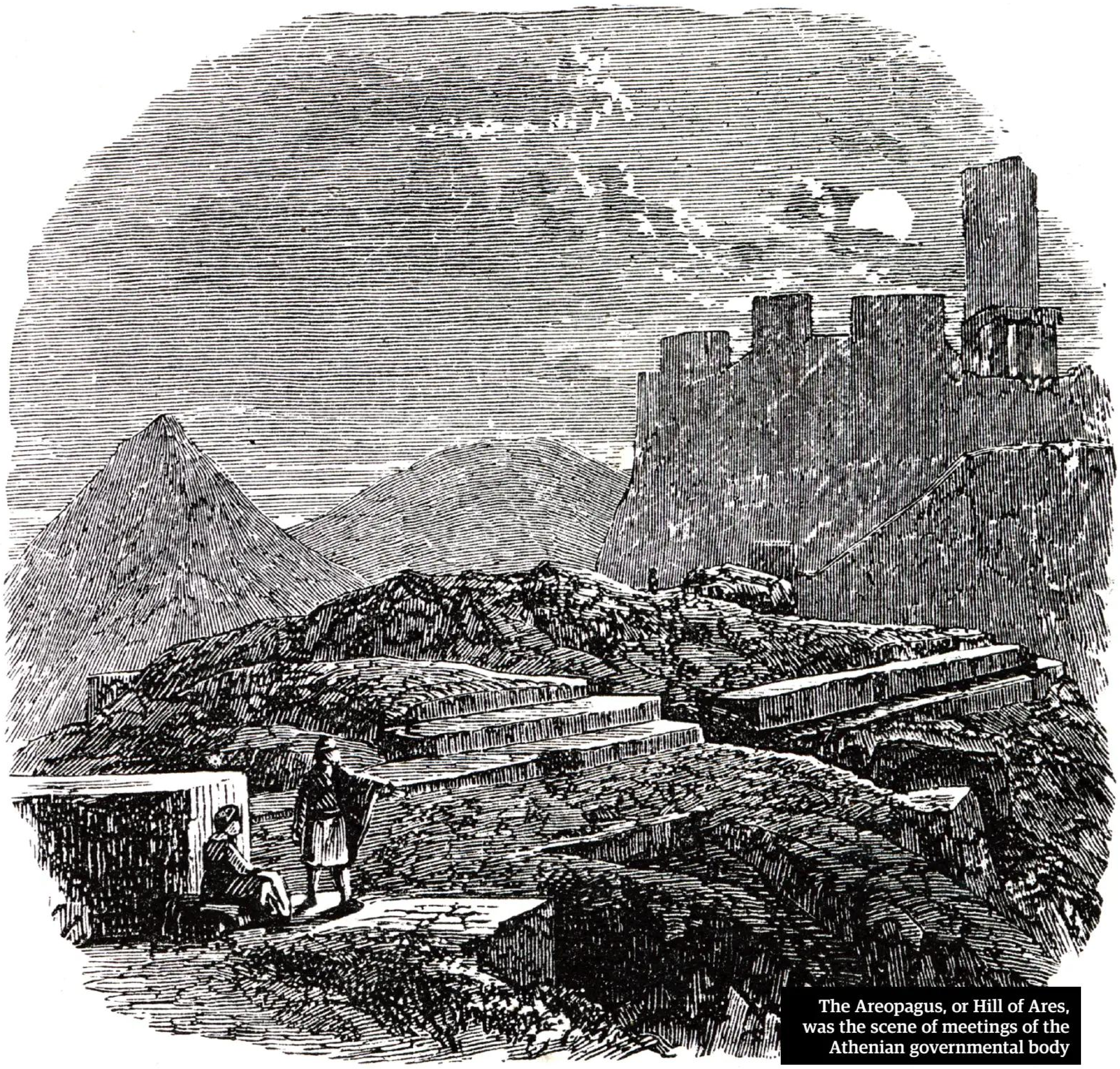
Draco's code provided the first written constitution of Athens, and the people had requested that he prepare it – although they were unaware that it would be so severe. The lawgiver was once supposedly asked why the sentence of death was so prevalent in the code. He responded that those convicted of minor offences deserved the punishment while he could think of no greater penalty for major crimes. The code also favoured nobility and the aristocratic class. For reasons that remain unclear, Draco was banished from Athens to the island of Aegina, where he spent much of his life.



Draco was the first recorded legislator of Athens



This image depicts the ostracism of the Athenian statesman Aristides. Pottery shards that bear his name are being tallied



The Areopagus, or Hill of Ares, was the scene of meetings of the Athenian governmental body

assembly. While retaining certain aspects of the oligarchy, Solon then brought forward certain aspects of the democracy that would later come to pass in Athens.

In an era of tyrants, Solon was certainly not one of them. Although he came from an aristocratic family and was probably given the opportunity for self-aggrandisement, he chose to champion the cause of the lower classes. In one last selfless act, he required the Athenians to abide by the model constitution that had been put in place for ten years. He then left the city-state of Athens for an extended period of time.

The wave of democracy that had begun to build in Athens during the early 6th century BCE was advanced somewhat ironically during the rule of the tyrant Peisistratos and his sons, Hippias and Hipparchus, which lasted about 50 years from 560 to 510 BCE. Using his army of mercenaries to support his rule, Peisistratos nevertheless maintained the goodwill of the people and even expanded the power of the governing bodies established by Solon. He continued to weaken the influence of the aristocracy and encouraged trade and agriculture while presiding over the redistribution of some lands on the Attic peninsula. The Alcmaeonidae family enlisted assistance from a Spartan army to eventually depose Hippias.

A brief struggle for supremacy in Athens ensued. Isagoras was elected an archon in 508 BCE, but his rival, Cleisthenes, a member of the Alcmaeonidae family, went directly to the people for support and gained much favour among all of the lower classes. When Isagoras summoned the Spartan army again to quash Cleisthenes, the Athenians protested heavily and then sent Isagoras and the Spartan army packing.

Athenian women were restricted in movement in public places and often segregated from the male population

CLEISTHENES AND FULL BLOOM

During the last decade of the 6th century BCE, Cleisthenes elevated Athenian democracy to prominence and became revered as its father. Although his period of rule and reform was brief, lasting only six years from 508 to 502 BCE, the impact of his measures was enormous, and it would last for two centuries.

Cleisthenes effectively eroded the influence of the aristocratic class and its distinction from the middle and working classes with the introduction of reforms that shaped a new consciousness among Athenians, a new perspective on themselves and on their relationship to the city-state. Cleisthenes made the village, known as the 'deme', the basic political unit of the new society. Rather than identifying themselves as individuals tied to families, citizens began to call themselves by names associated with their home villages. This

Alamy, Getty

emphasis on geographic location rather than lineage fostered a culture of 'Athenian identity' rather than a family link and helped to prevent the rise of another tyrant to challenge authority.

Each deme was administered by a demarch, whose responsibilities were similar to a town mayor and included placing individuals in three groups or 'thirds,' including verified males who were over 18 and therefore citizens, those citizens selected to serve on the council, and those that were eligible for participation in the assembly. To further engage every Athenian citizen in the process of government, Cleisthenes reorganised the social structure further, effectively abolishing an old system of tribes and replacing it with a new framework. Each of the thirds was assigned to one of ten new tribes. Each tribe contained three thirds, one from the city, one from the coastal area, and one from the interior of the greater city-state. In turn, each tribe sent 50 citizens annually to serve on a new council of 500, increased in number from 400 since the time of Solon.

The new structure brought together citizens from all areas of Athens. The tribes became tremendously influential in the democratic process, while the citizenry was thoroughly engaged – all the way to the local level. Cleisthenes possessed the forethought to eliminate the possibility of regional or provincial politics from undermining the process with the passage of time. He asserted that once a citizen was registered in a particular deme, he then remained with that deme for the purposes of governmental participation regardless of whether he relocated to another area of the city-state of Athens.

"The authority of the boule was extensive, ranging from the disposition of government property to livestock"

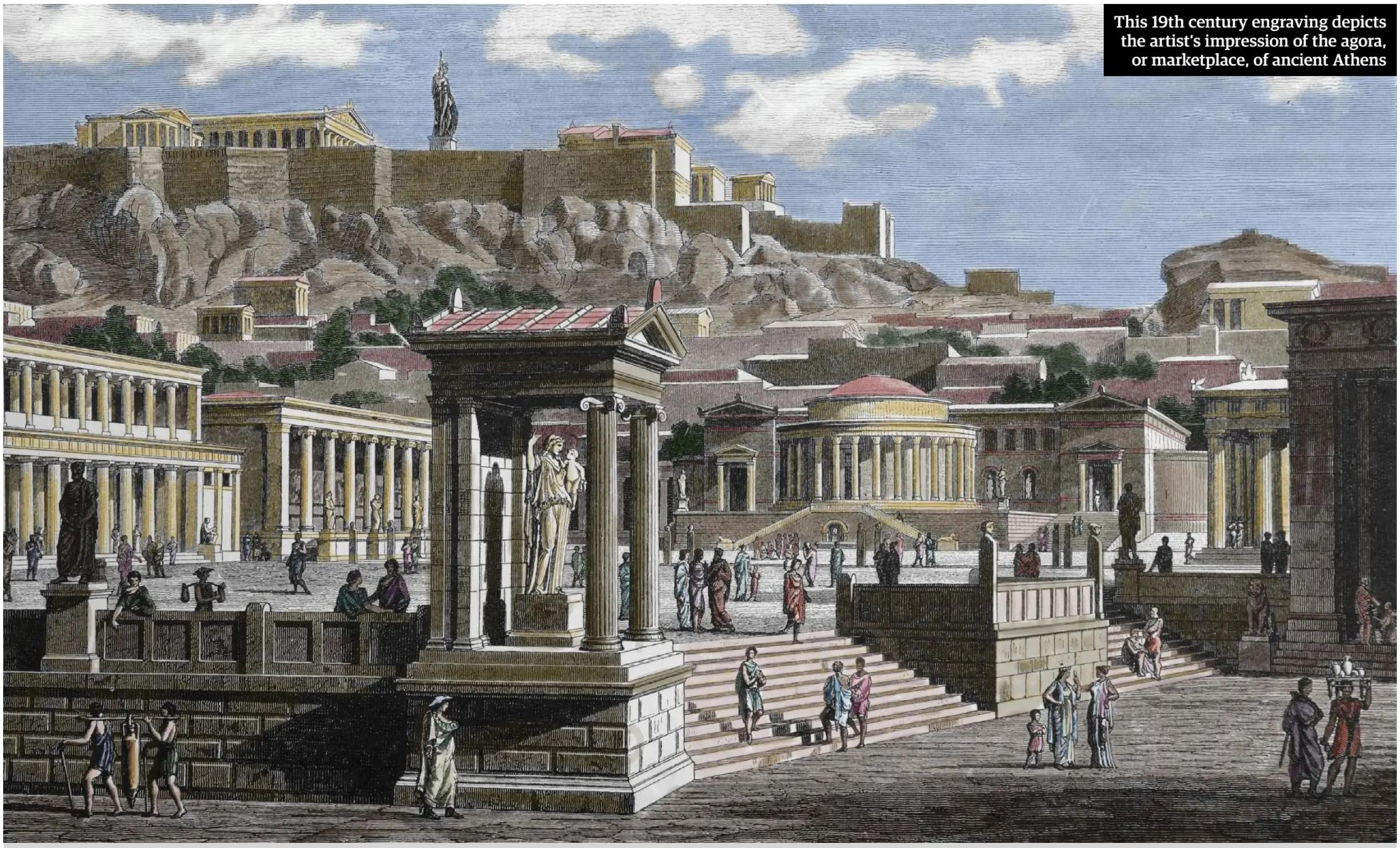
To add an air of legitimacy and historical context to the new social and political apparatus, Cleisthenes named the ten new tribes after one of the city-state's heroes of antiquity. These were supposedly handed down by Apollo, the sun god, through the oracle of Delphi. The ten heroes included Pandion, Oeneus, Leos, Cecrops, Hippothoon, Erechtheus, Antiochus, Acamas, Aegeus, and Ajax. These heroes were further immortalised and revered with the placement of their statues in the agora of Athens, near the area where new laws and proclamations were publicly placed for the people to view.

The ekklesia, or assembly, retained the authority to grant special powers to the council of 500, or boule, during an emergency

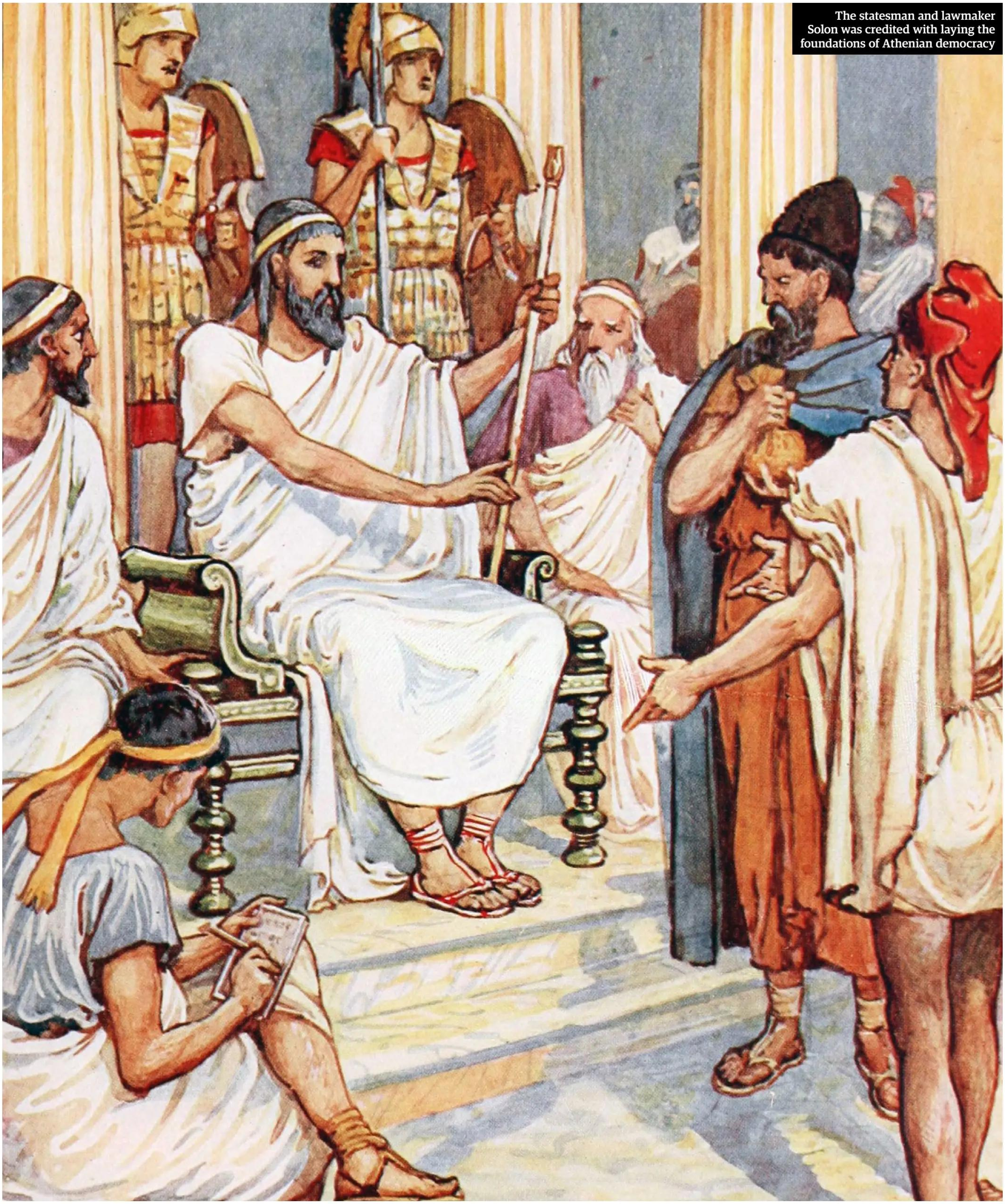
STRUCTURE AND STRENGTH

Athenian democracy is remembered historically as a sometimes raucous, litigious, and contentious institution in its practical application. Still, it fundamentally revolutionised the role of government in the lives of the people and their own ability to influence the course of events. Although full participation was denied to many residents of Athens, the emergence of the democratic process was nevertheless one of the most profound events in the history of the Western world. The reformed structure introduced by Cleisthenes around 507 BCE retained institutions whose roots lay with Solon nearly a century earlier.

Cleisthenes called his system of government demokratia, or 'rule by the people'. Its basic structure included three pillars that served to maintain equity, dispense justice, and write and interpret laws.



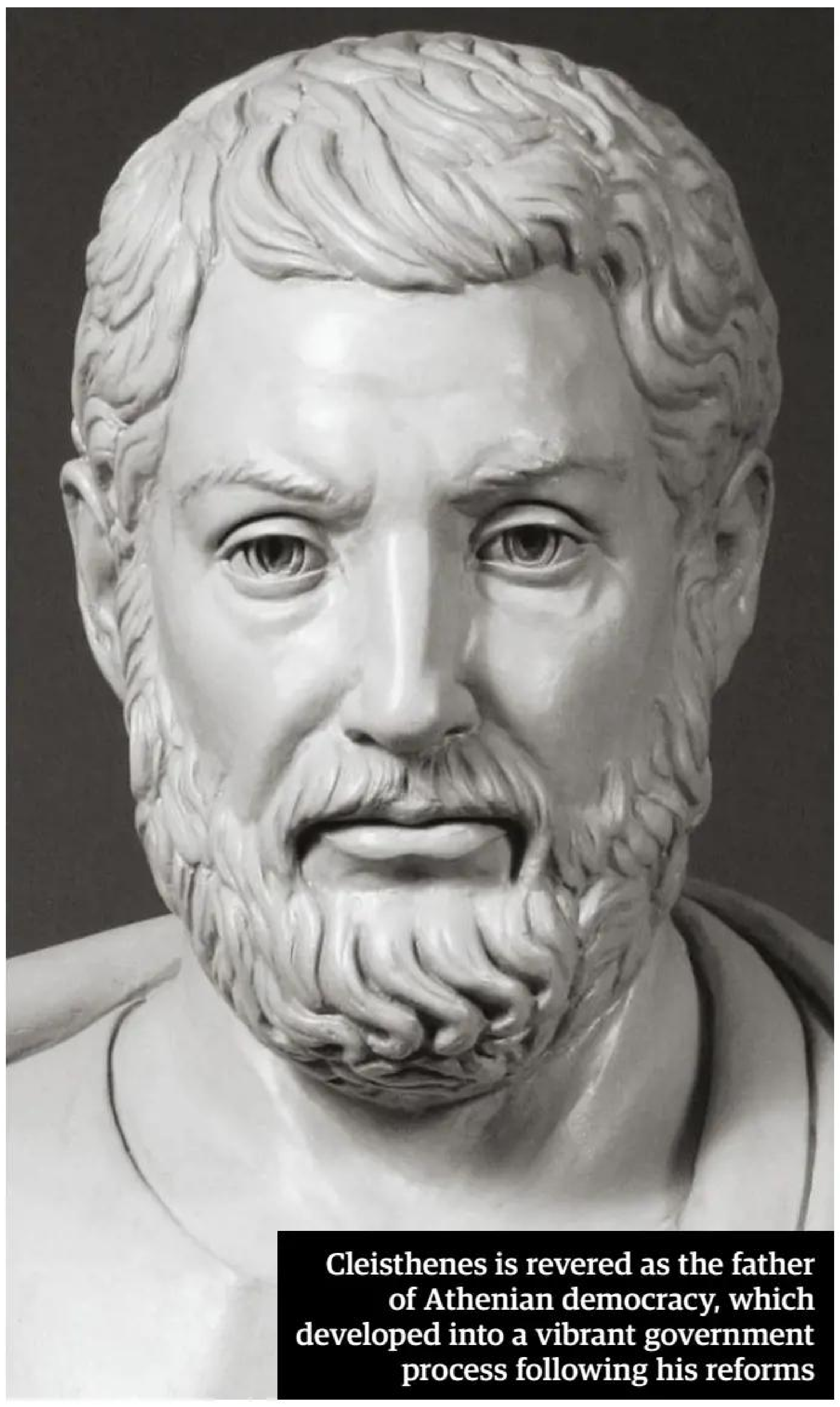
This 19th century engraving depicts the artist's impression of the agora, or marketplace, of ancient Athens



The statesman and lawmaker Solon was credited with laying the foundations of Athenian democracy

Alamy

The ruins of the Pnyx, the meeting place of the ancient ekklesia, lie empty. The speaker's platform remains in the centre



Cleisthenes is revered as the father of Athenian democracy, which developed into a vibrant government process following his reforms

The assembly, or ekklesia, was the central governing authority in Athens. In its early period the ekklesia met only ten times per year. However, that number was later expanded to 40 times, while called meetings might also take place. The meetings were open to any citizen of Athens and were held in a theatre on a hillside called Pnyx just west of the great Athenian Acropolis. The ekklesia undertook the writing of new laws and the revision of those already in force. It deliberated questions of foreign policy, including whether or not to go to war, and it held public officials accountable for their conduct.

Adult male citizens considered it their responsibility to attend assembly meetings, but duties with the armed forces, the harvest, or other activities usually limited the gatherings to about 5,000 people. At times attendance was compulsory. Slaves would extend a rope stained in red across the agora to herd citizens into an ekklesia meeting. Those whose clothing bore telltale crimson marks were then fined. By the late 5th century BCE attendees to the ekklesia were paid for their time. Only the first 6,000 to arrive received compensation, and the red rope was still in use - as a barrier to the late arrivals.

The council of 500 convened under Cleisthenes was called the 'boule'. Those 50 men chosen from the ten tribes to comprise the council served terms of one year. The authority of the boule was extensive, ranging from the disposition of government property from ships to livestock and receiving emissaries from other city-states. The boule met every day, and since it was responsible for much of the routine conduct of government-related business in Athens probably exerted the most significant influence on the lives of the people. The primary function of the boule was to determine those matters of state that were worthy of presentation before the ekklesia. Therefore, the boule exerted tremendous influence in the political life of the city-state and the democratic process.

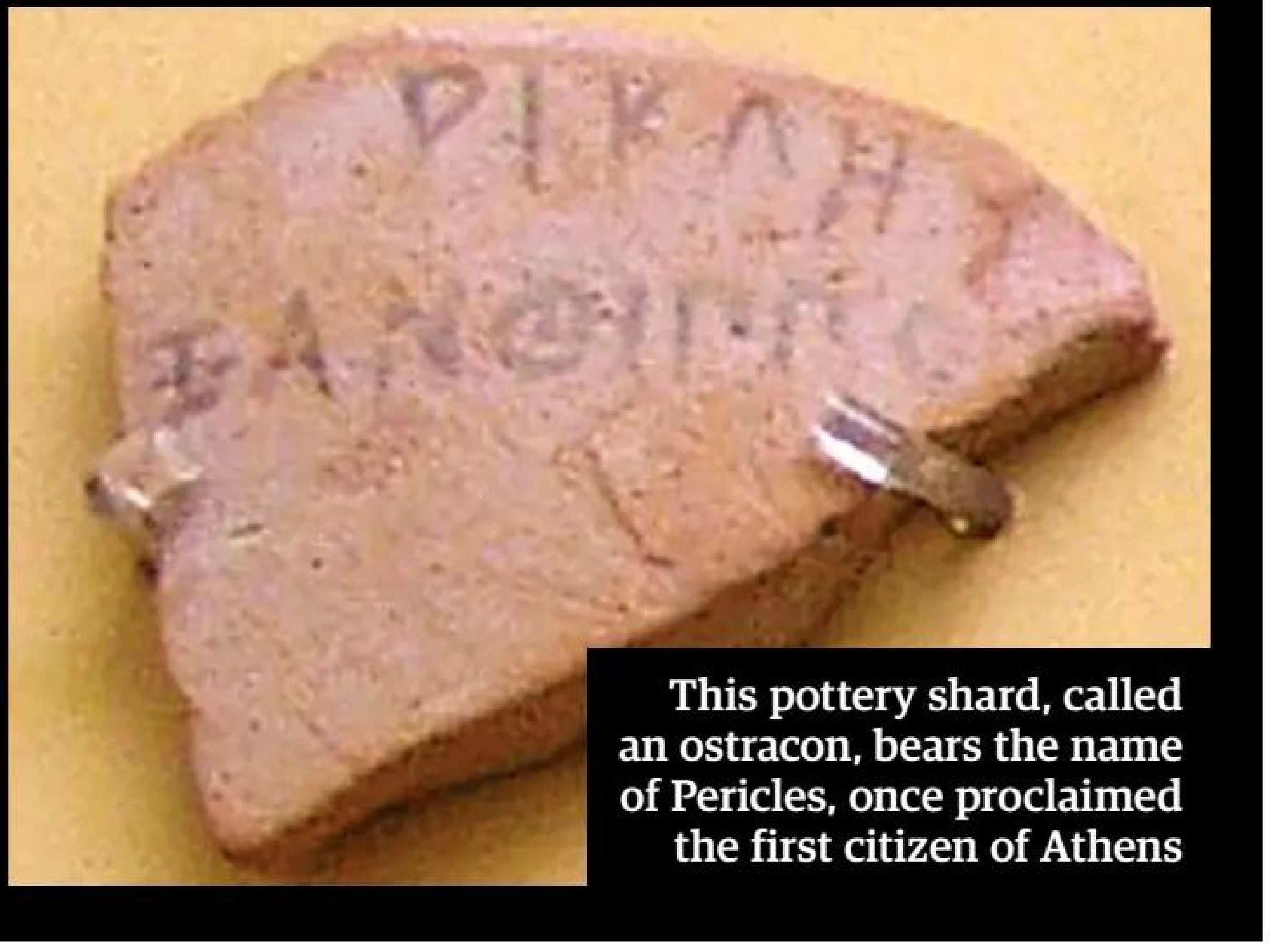
Citizens blamed their democratic government for the disastrous expedition against Syracuse in 413 BCE

Interestingly, those who would occupy positions within the boule were determined by lot rather than ballot. The reason was simple.

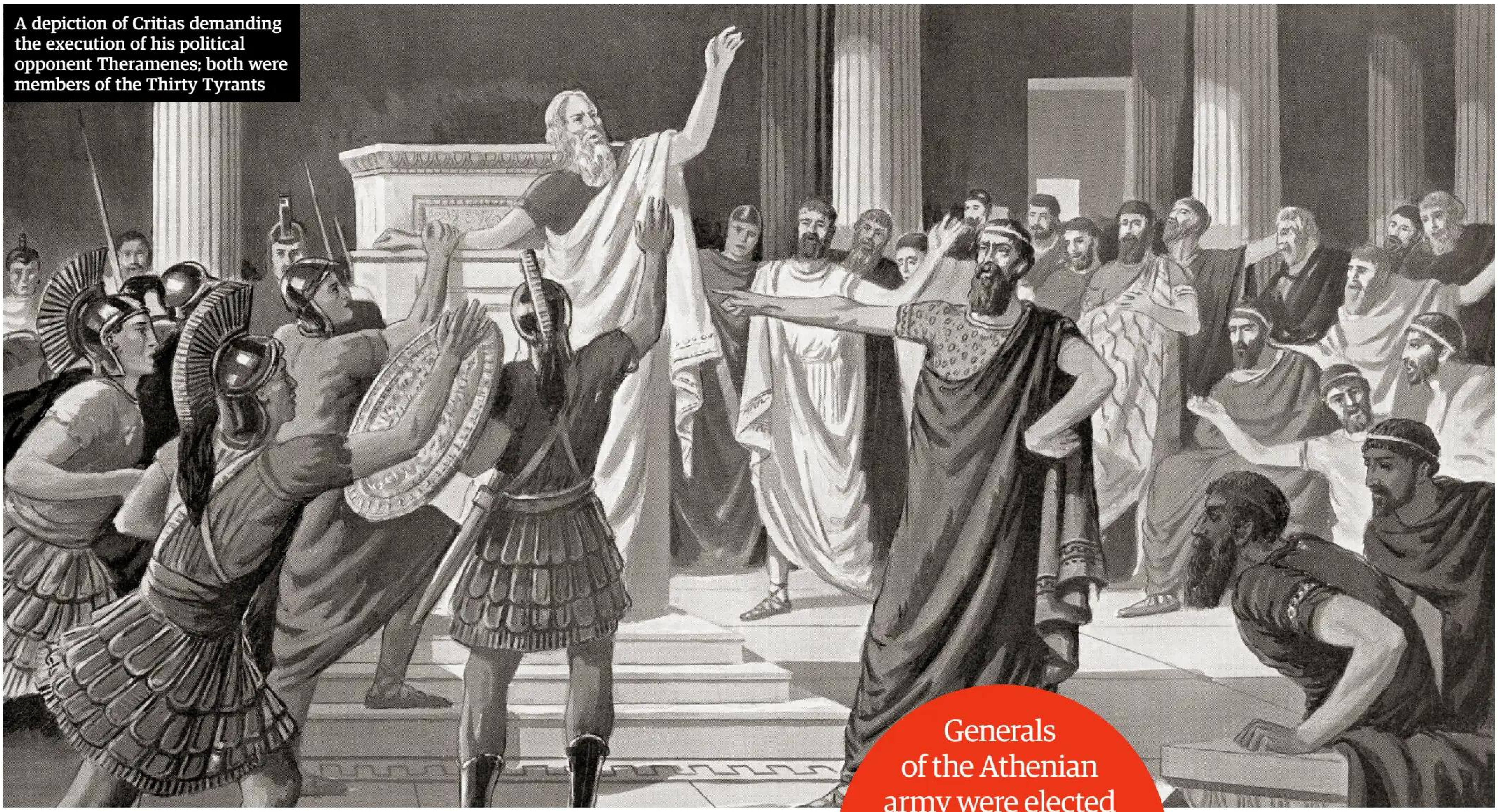
THROUGH OSTRACISM

The ekklesia, or assembly, a powerful body of the Athenian democracy, retained one peculiar power - that of ostracism. An innovation of Cleisthenes probably intended to banish any individual who posed a threat to the Athenian democracy, ostracism provided for the expulsion of that individual following a vote of the ekklesia. Annually the assembly voted whether or not to conduct an ostracism. If the vote was in favour, the process took place at another meeting held within a few months of the first. Citizens voted by scratching the name of a person that they wanted banished on a shard of pottery called an 'ostraka.' At least 6,000 citizens were required to vote in order for these clay ballots to be tallied.

The individual that got the highest number of votes was required to leave Athens for ten years; however, he did not forfeit his property or lose his rights as an Athenian citizen. Ostracism may have actually been looked upon as an honour. At times an individual became so powerful that he posed a threat to democracy itself. Among those who were ostracised during their lifetime were Themistocles, hero of the wars with Persia, Thucydides, politician and historian, and Alcibiades, statesman, orator, and military commander.



This pottery shard, called an ostracon, bears the name of Pericles, once proclaimed the first citizen of Athens



A depiction of Critias demanding the execution of his political opponent Theramenes; both were members of the Thirty Tyrants

"The court system, or 'dikasteria', was a functional marvel"

Generals of the Athenian army were elected to their commands rather than chosen by lottery, as some other officials were chosen

An individual chosen through a drawing could attribute his selection to pure luck. An election, however, was subject to outside influences such as bribery or back room dealing. Elections might also perpetuate a permanently entitled class of officials within the boule over time and promote the temptation for personal gain. Again, the lottery approach would safeguard against such a situation. A tantalising question remains, though, as historians have noted with some chagrin that certain citizens and members of their families seemed to serve with much greater regularity than others. Were these few individuals just lucky?

An integral component of Athenian democracy, the court system, or 'dikasteria', was a functional marvel. Each day a pool of citizens, males over 30 years old, assembled. From their number, 500 were chosen to serve as jurors. The people brought cases directly to court. There was no police force in the city-state to arrest and charge an individual; therefore, the jury held tremendous power in the discharge of cases that other citizens presented during arguments for and against any accused party.

Public cases were argued first by the prosecutor and then by the defendant. Each was allowed a single speech of three hours' duration, and each was timed with a water clock. If a case was to be heard in private, the time for arguments was significantly diminished. A case was forbidden to last longer than a single day, and jurors were routinely vocal, loudly expressing their support or doubt of a certain point. In either case, when both sides had presented their points of view, there was minimal discussion among the jurors - no time allotted for formal deliberations - and the vote on guilt or innocence was taken.

There were no prohibitions as to what kinds of cases could be brought before an Athenian jury, which sometimes allowed individuals to drag enemies into the public arena for embarrassment or vengeance. Jurors were required to interpret the motive of the accuser or plaintiff as well as the guilt or innocence of the defendant. Beginning around 462 BCE, jurors began receiving pay for their services with the expectation that compensation made the job an endeavour in which every citizen might participate, not just the aristocratic, wealthy, or those who could afford to lose wages from their regular vocation.

At approximately the same time, Ephialtes began a successful effort to further reduce the influence of the Areopagus. He prosecuted members of the body for poor administration and successfully divided much of its remaining power between the ekklesia, the boule, and the dikasteria. When Ephialtes was finished, the Areopagus was no longer the guardian of the constitution, but merely a court in itself that adjudicated cases involving murder and religion.

TWILIGHT OF DEMOCRACY

Ephialtes was assassinated in 461 BCE, allowing his rival Pericles to consolidate power. While the democracy continued to function, the influence of Pericles became so great that he was deemed the "first citizen of Athens." Controversy surrounds the rule of Pericles. Some historians believe he advanced democracy through measures that benefitted the lower classes, while others assert that his personal power and sway over the government contributed to its decline.

Democratic ideals in Athens endured despite challenges during the years of the Peloponnesian War, including the short-lived return of an oligarchy in 411 BCE. Defeat at the hands of the Spartans in 404 BCE brought the rule of the Thirty Tyrants, a puppet government that lasted only a year before the return of democracy. In 338 BCE, however, the irresistible tide of the Macedonian army, with King Philip II at its head, conquered most of Greece, ending the noble experiment in Athenian democracy.

Despite its relatively short period of existence in Athens, the concepts of democracy survived to later influence the Roman Empire and in turn to shape modern democratic governments.

Getty, Wikimedia Commons

RISE & FALL OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

The democratic model of the Roman Republic still shapes governments today - but how was it created and why did it fail?

Written by Ben Gazur

In 509 BCE, the last king of Rome, Tarquinius Superbus, was cast out of the city. When his son raped a noblewoman named Lucretia, she killed herself because of the assault on her honour. A group of aristocrats led by Lucius Junius Brutus rose up in disgust at the outrage and overthrew the monarchy, swearing to never again allow a king to reign in Rome. That is the story the Romans told themselves about how their unique and complex Republic came to be, though there are strong doubts about its accuracy.

The true origin of the Roman Republic is shrouded in mystery and the accounts that survive are probably later tales created to explain how the systems which existed came into being. Italy had long been colonised by Greek city states, so it is likely that the formation of the Roman Republic was influenced by Greek democratic models, but it is impossible to trace any direct link as many of the records of the Roman Republic were destroyed when Rome was sacked by Gauls in 390 BCE.

All that can be said is that Rome probably did once have kings, but at some point the people drove them out. Once freed from monarchy the people had to decide how to govern themselves. The solution was a Republic of checks and balances that evolved over centuries, designed to deny absolute power to any one person or group.

The Greek writer Polybius, writing in the 2nd century BCE, praised the Roman government as the supreme example of a mixed constitution that drew on the best of all possible systems

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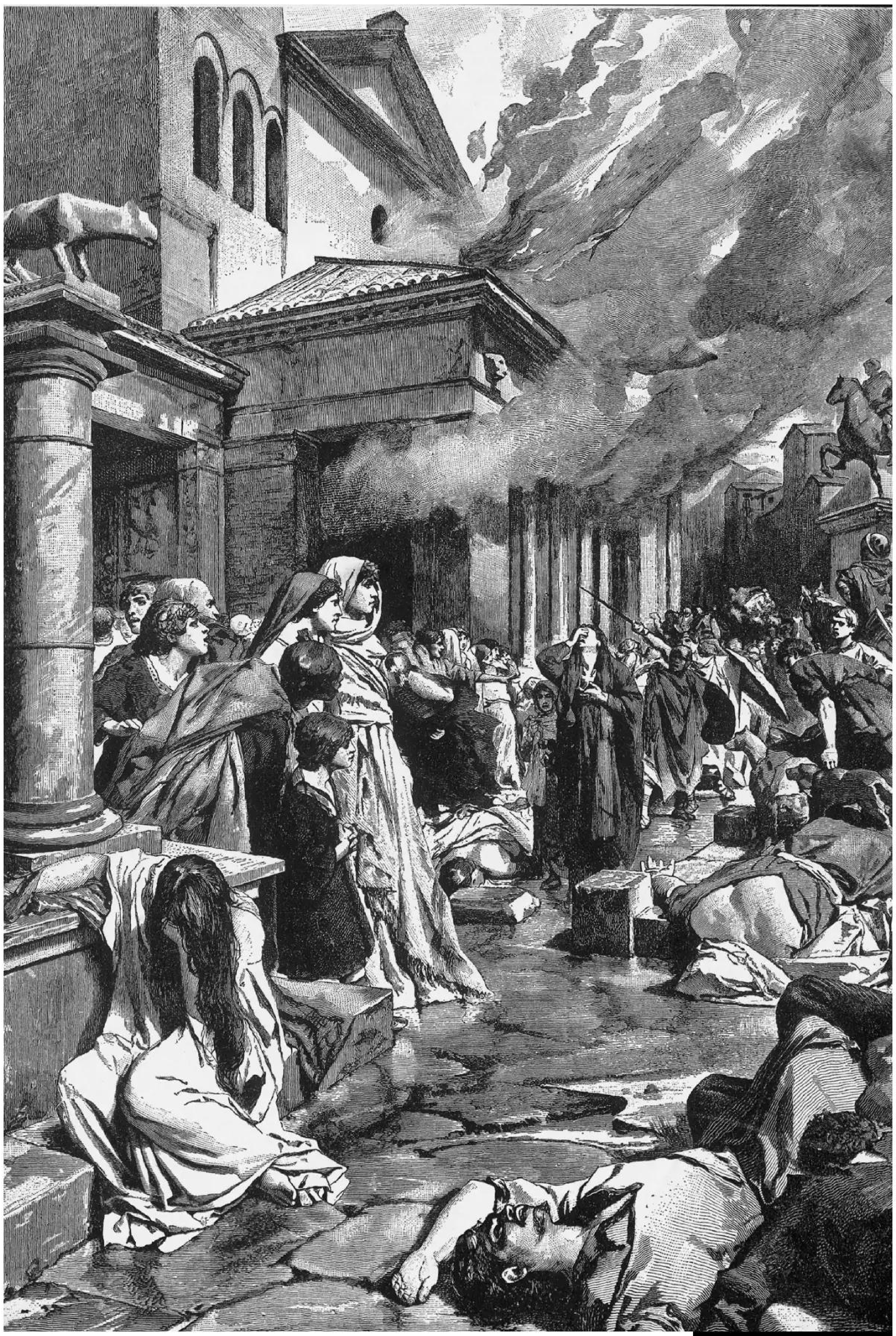
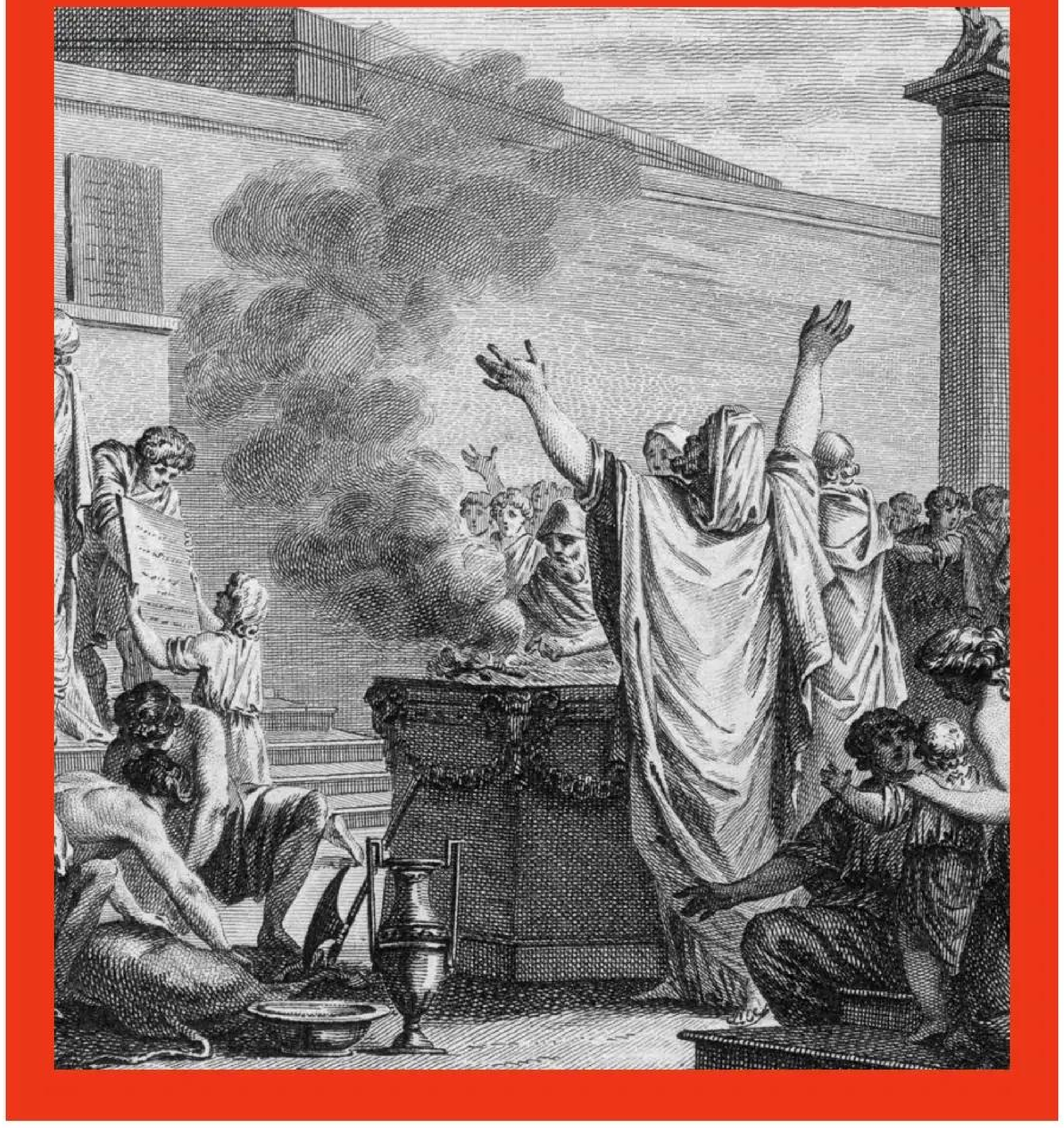


It is thought that records relating to the formation of the Republic were likely lost in the sacking of Rome by the Gauls in 390 BCE

THE TWELVE TABLES

In the 5th century BCE the plebeians became restive due to subjugation by the wealthy patricians who controlled many of the offices of state. To settle matters, the rights of all citizens were codified for the first time and published on 12 bronze tablets, which were placed in public where they could be seen and read by anyone. The laws and rights written on the tablets became the cornerstone of Roman law and treated as foundational to the Republic. By enumerating the rights of all citizens the tension between the classes was eased as the poor could now call on the legal system any time their rights were trampled on.



– be they democratic, monarchical, or aristocratic. At the head of the Republic were two consuls elected for a single year by a vote of all male Roman citizens. The consuls had supreme command of the Roman legions in times of war, and in times of peace were charged to enact the resolutions of the Senate and laws passed by the popular assembly. Each consul could veto the actions of the other, meaning that neither had the full powers of a king or dictator. Becoming consul was the highest achievement a man could reach in politics so competition between the great families to hold the office was intensely fierce, meaning if one family came to hold the consulship too regularly the others were likely to combine to pull them down. This competition helped to preserve the state from autocracy.

The consuls were elected from the members of the Senate. To become a member of the Senate a man had to meet certain age criteria and be elected to one of the major magistracies. Senators served for life after being elected as a quaestor – the state officials in charge of financial affairs – and from there those seeking to rise to become consul had to pass through the cursus honorum, a sequence of increasingly important elected offices. The Senate could not pass laws but was sometimes considered to be the most important part of the government because they controlled the funds of the state and their decrees guided the actions of the consuls and other magistrates. According to Polybius, the Senate was the best type of oligarchy.

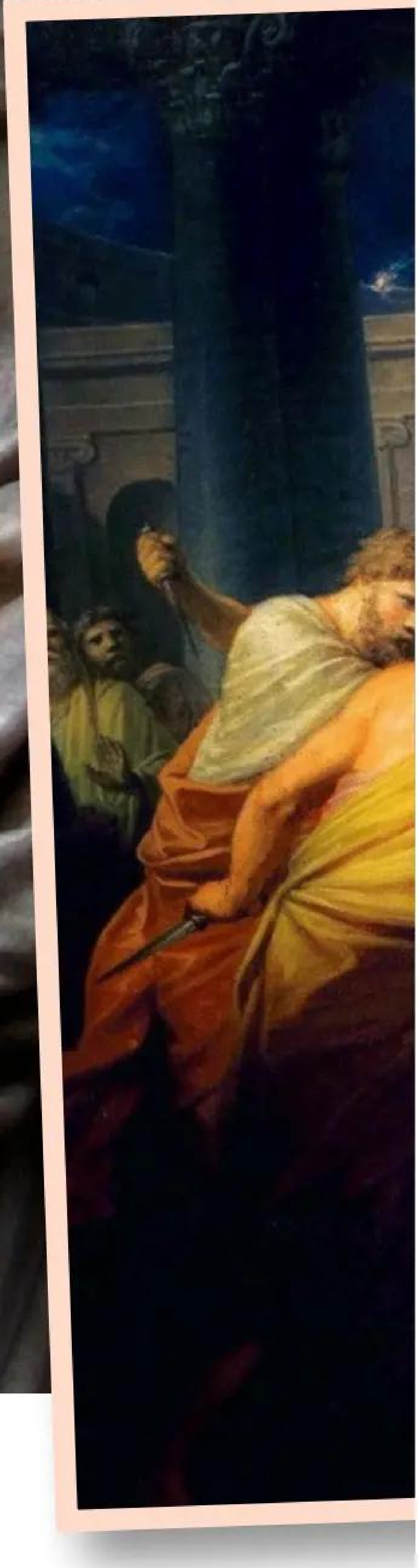
The final, and largest, group involved in the running of the Republic was composed of all male citizens when they participated in public assemblies. According to Roman legal experts, the citizenship was identical with the Roman state and so the people were the source of all legitimate power. The assemblies were the most democratic aspect of the Roman government, though not directly democratic as voting took place in blocs. The citizens were assigned to a bloc based on either place of residence or level of wealth, depending on the type of assembly, and each bloc cast a single vote decided by a vote of its members. The various assemblies were called to elect new magistrates, discuss laws to either enact or reject, and handle questions of peace and war. Because assemblies had to be called and guided by a magistrate to be legal, it was thought that the democratic element of the government lacked the worst aspects of mob rule.

By the 2nd century BCE the Republic was a stable and balanced form of government but to reach this stage, many innovations had been brought in to ensure no branch dominated the others. Many of the changes came about due to agitation by the lower classes of Rome, the plebeians. In the early Republic most of the political

Modern historians have cast doubt over the story of prince Sextus Tarquinius and Lucretia, as it does not have any contemporary sources

Getty Images, Alamy

Octavian, Caesar's heir, became the first Roman Emperor, transforming the republic into an autocracy



power was in the hands of the patrician elite and this led to a series of crises known as the Conflict of the Orders.

One of the most effective methods the plebeians had to bring about change was to withdraw from the city of Rome. Known as a secessio plebis, this involved the people leaving Rome en masse. Without a population to command the patricians and magistrates were left with nothing but their titles - to govern the state, they had to acknowledge that the consent of the governed was important. It was due to the plebeians that a formal record of the rights of citizens, the Twelve Tables, was created.

It was also due to the plebeians abandoning Rome that a new magistracy was created to try and counterbalance the power of the Senate. The tribuneship was designed to protect the rights of the plebeians. Tribunes were elected only by the plebeians and only plebeians could be tribunes. Once elected the tribunes were made inviolable, so no one could lay hands on them or coerce them with violence to act against their will. The tribunes had broad powers because they could call assemblies to pass laws or veto any law passed by the people or decree of the Senate.

Roman citizenship was a closely guarded status that was treasured by all who held it. Being a citizen of Rome bestowed full rights and duties on a man, while Roman women were restricted from political office or voting. Citizens of other cities and towns under the control of Rome were also unable to claim the full rights of a citizen and slaves were treated as little more than their owner's property to dispose of as they wished. Once Rome had conquered Italy, the question of granting Roman citizenship to the Italian allies became a vexed question and erupted into a war in 91 BCE when the allies rebelled. Only once the war was concluded were the allies enrolled as citizens.

The Roman Republic lasted for centuries and oversaw the expansion of Rome from a single city-state to an empire controlling large areas of Europe and the Near East. Yet the success of the Republic might also have been its undoing. Throughout the 1st century BCE, generals who commanded the large armies required for governing overseas territories grew ever more influential. The inequality between the richest and poorest grew wider and this could be exploited by politicians and generals seeking popular support by promising land and reform. The most powerful generals began to march on Rome to take command of the state.

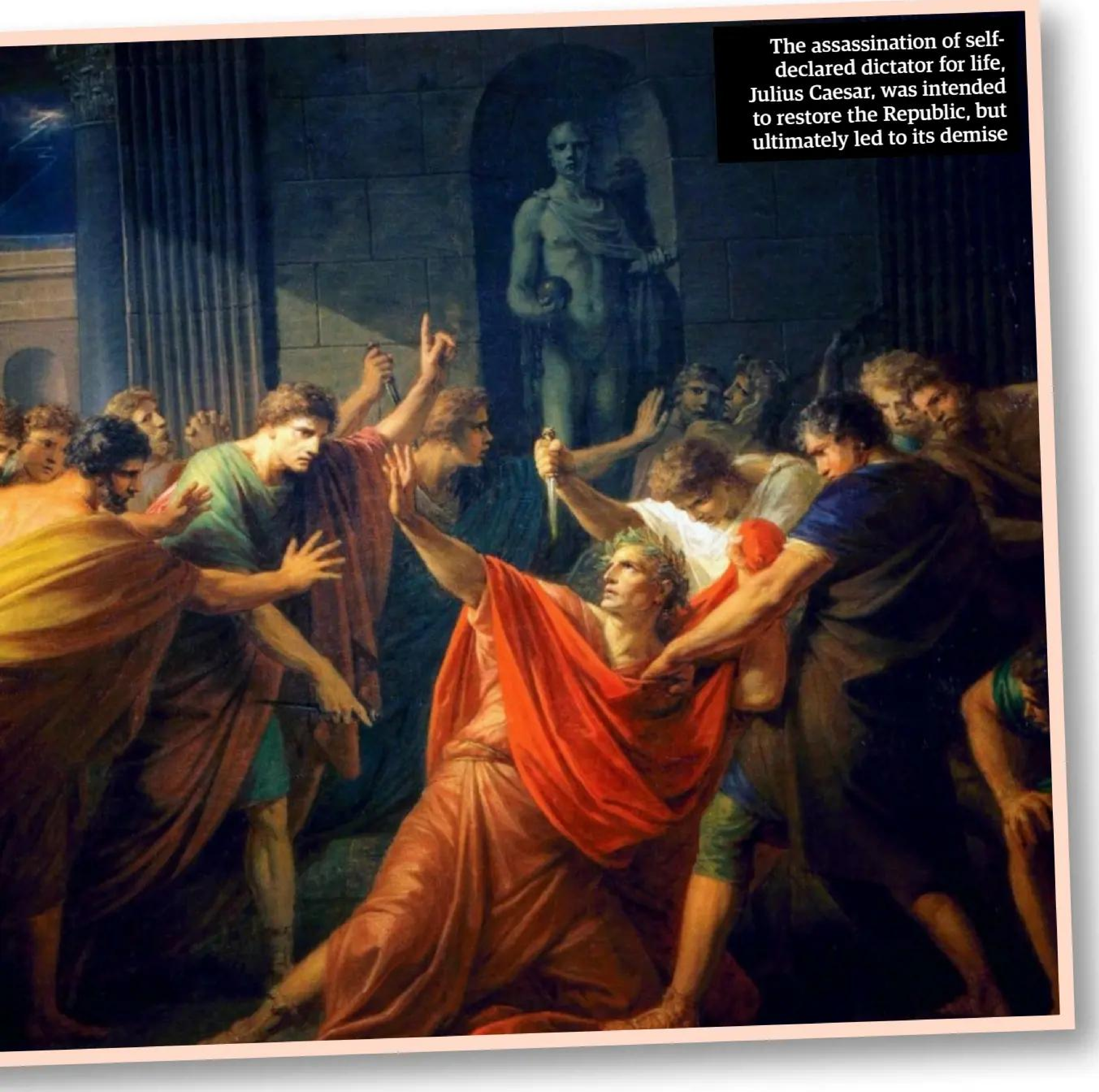
Julius Caesar was one of the most successful of these generals when he defeated the forces of the Senate and rival general, Pompey the Great, in a civil war. By 44 BCE, all of Caesar's rivals were defeated and he had been declared dictator for life with the power to make appointments to magistracies without recourse to elections. A cabal of senators, led by Marcus Junius Brutus, assassinated Caesar on the floor of the Senate and declared that the Republic was freed from a would-be king. However this declaration did not make it so.

Caesar's adopted son, Octavian, fought to avenge Caesar and civil wars erupted again, which ended with Octavian assuming ultimate power. While Caesar had openly displayed his domination, Octavian - later known as Augustus - sought to hide the nature of his unique position of authority by holding to the forms of the Republic and declaring himself simply the first among equals. Elections were still held, but they were no longer free, as only candidates approved by Augustus stood any chance of winning. The Republic had fallen and the Roman Empire started.

"Elections were still held, but they were no longer free"

FOLLOWING ROME

The Roman Republican model of government has influenced political thinkers for centuries, either directly or indirectly. The American and French revolutions of the 18th century were undertaken by people well-read in Roman history who consciously drew on Roman sources for ideas of republican government, rhetoric, and even artistic models. The French revolutionaries saw themselves as modern-day Brutuses slaying a wicked tyrant to bring about liberty. The constitution of the United States was based on that of Rome in its creation of executive, legislative, and judicial branches, with each checking the power of the others. The influence of ancient Greek and Roman democracy in political history is also embodied in the neoclassical architecture that can be found on many government buildings around the world.



The assassination of self-declared dictator for life, Julius Caesar, was intended to restore the Republic, but ultimately led to its demise

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DEMOCRACY IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

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Explore the medieval milestones in the history of democracy

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How the Vikings established the first representative assemblies

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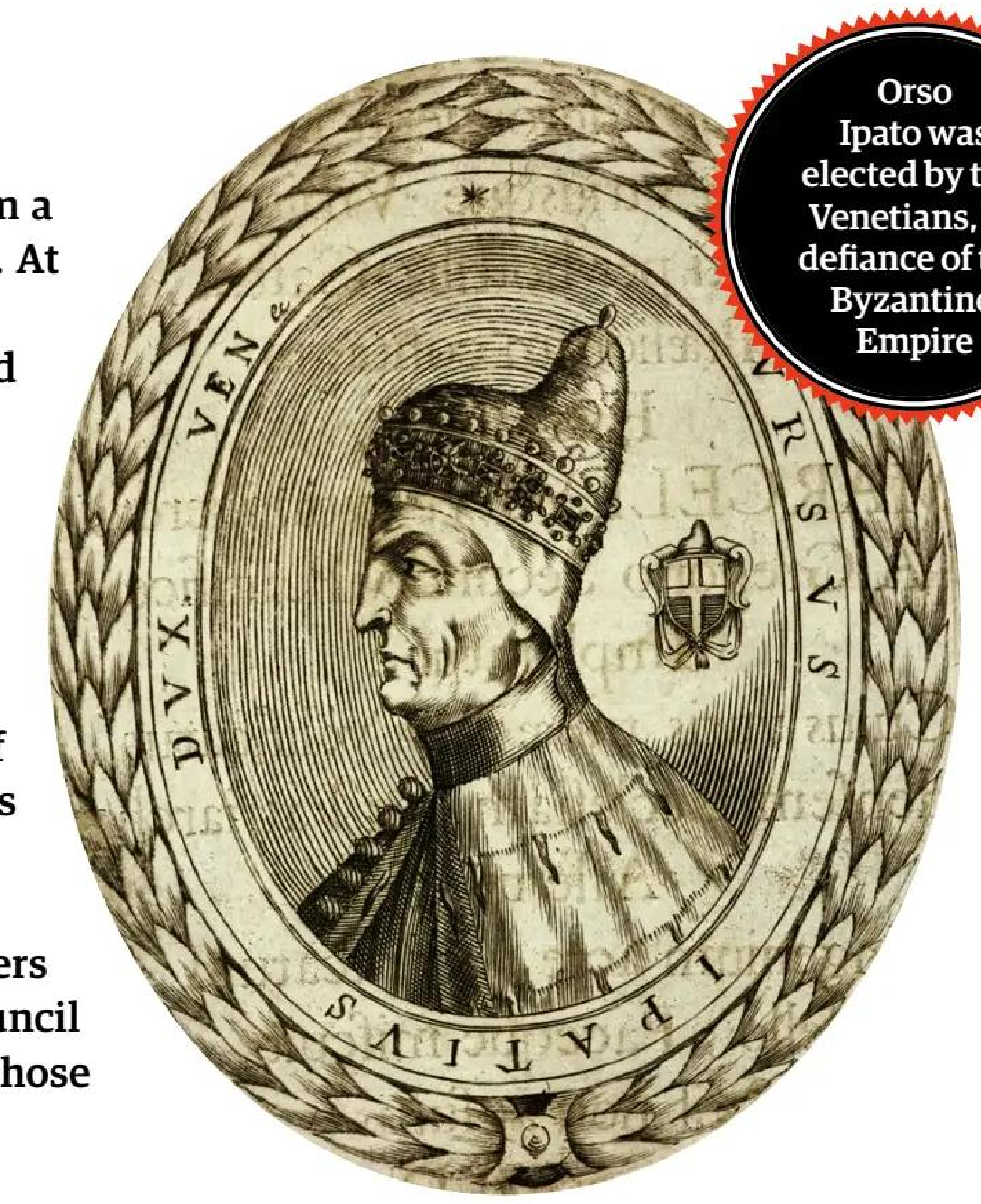
DEMOCRACY THROUGH HISTORY: MEDIEVAL MILESTONES

Written by Ben Gazur

726 THE FIRST DOGE

VENICE

The Republic of Venice formed from a semi-autonomous city government. At first the city was under the control of the Byzantine Empire but elected their own leaders. In 726 CE the Venetians elected Orso Ipato as the first Doge who was truly independent of the Byzantine court. The first Doges were chosen by an assembly of all free men living in the city but the election of the Doge evolved over the centuries in which the Venetian republic flourished. It often involved a complex process of electing members to a great council and from this council members were picked by lottery – those chosen voted for the Doge.

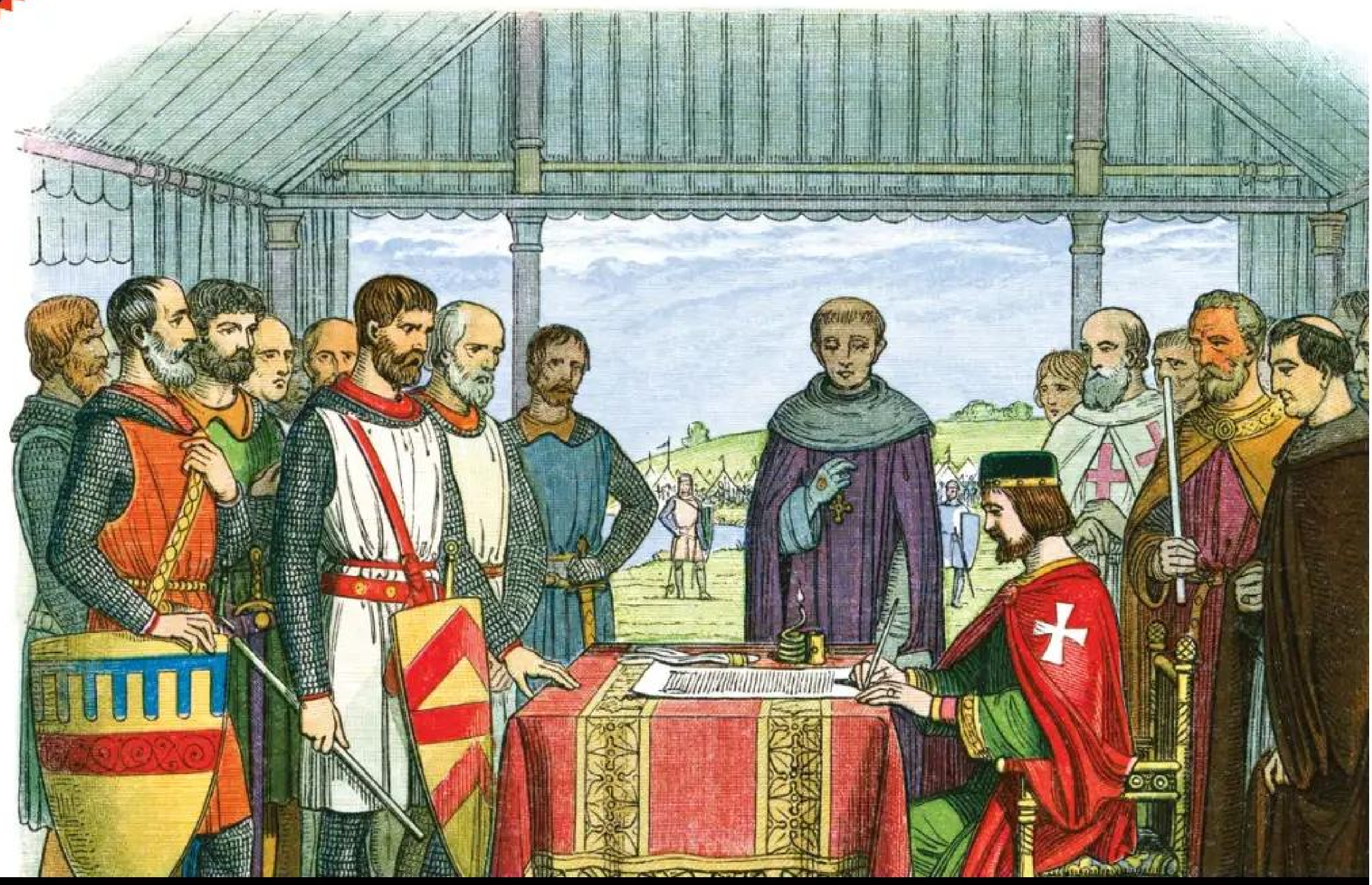


Orso Ipato was elected by the Venetians, in defiance of the Byzantine Empire

1215 MAGNA CARTA

ENGLAND

The powers of medieval English kings were far reaching but ill-defined. Under King John many of the barons felt that he was trampling on the customary rights of the nobility, church and people. In 1215, Magna Carta ('Great Charter') was drawn up to attempt to quell disputes and King John agreed to its contents. Among the dozens of clauses in the charter were several that paved the way for future democratic developments by placing limits on the powers of the monarch. Importantly the king was forbidden to tax the realm without the common consent of the kingdom. Kings were no longer above the law.



ELECTED IMAMS

8TH CENTURY

The Ibadi sect of Islam in Oman chose their Imams, who had broad legal and military powers, through elections of all male members of the community.

NORSE DEMOCRACY

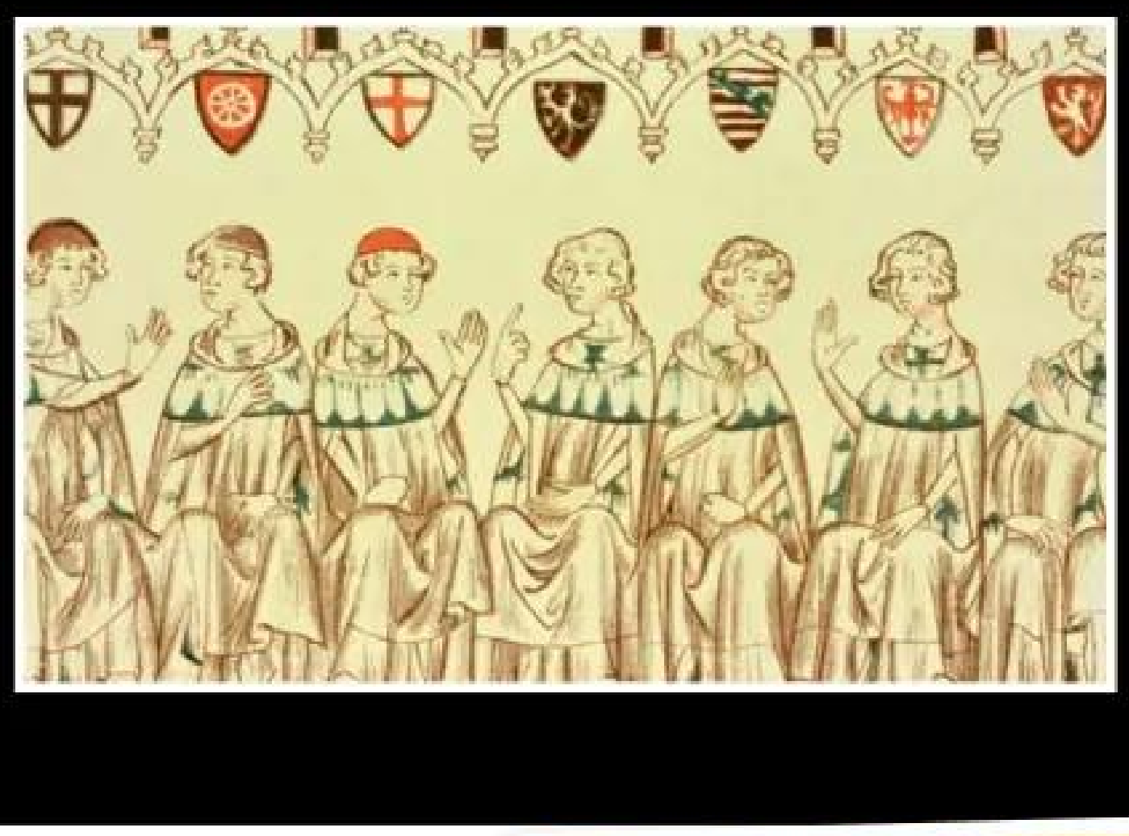
~900

In the early 10th century an assembly called the Gulaþing met each year in Norway, where every free male was allowed to discuss matters of taxation, legal cases, and the creation of laws.

ELECTED EMPERORS

10TH CENTURY ONWARD

The leadership of the Holy Roman Empire was not hereditary but an elected position. The earliest elections may have had a large number of voters but this was gradually restricted to a few powerful prince-electors (right).



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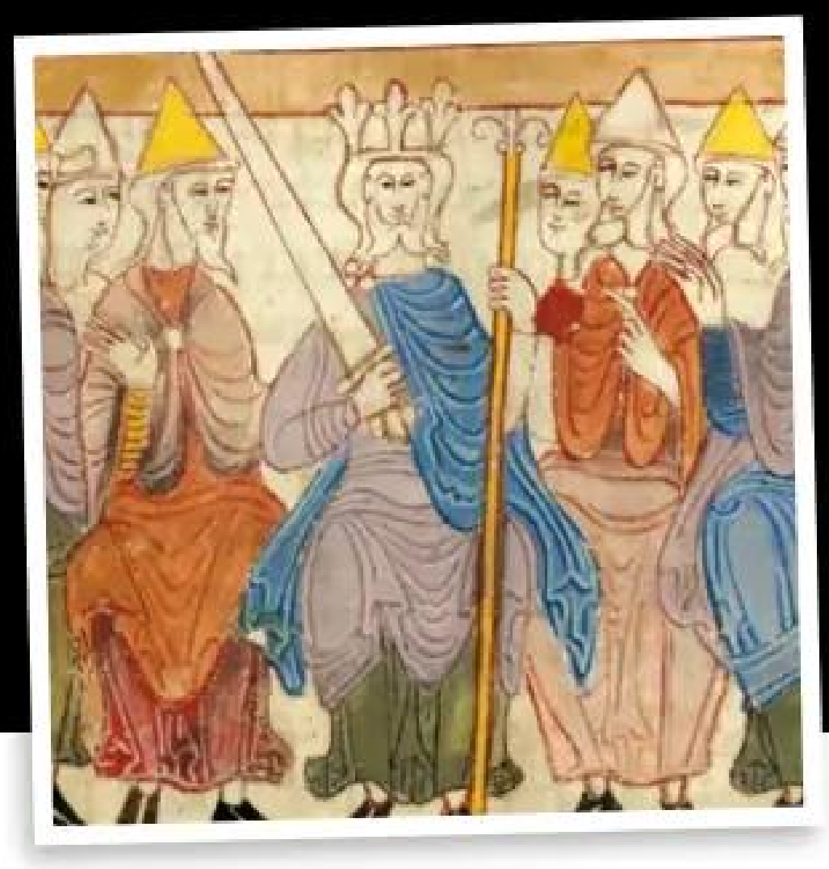


THE WITENAGEMOT

8TH CENTURY

Anglo-Saxon kings in England occasionally called meetings of important advisors, known as the Witenagemot. Local meetings on the county level, called moots, were attended by representatives from each village.

TOWN COMMUNES

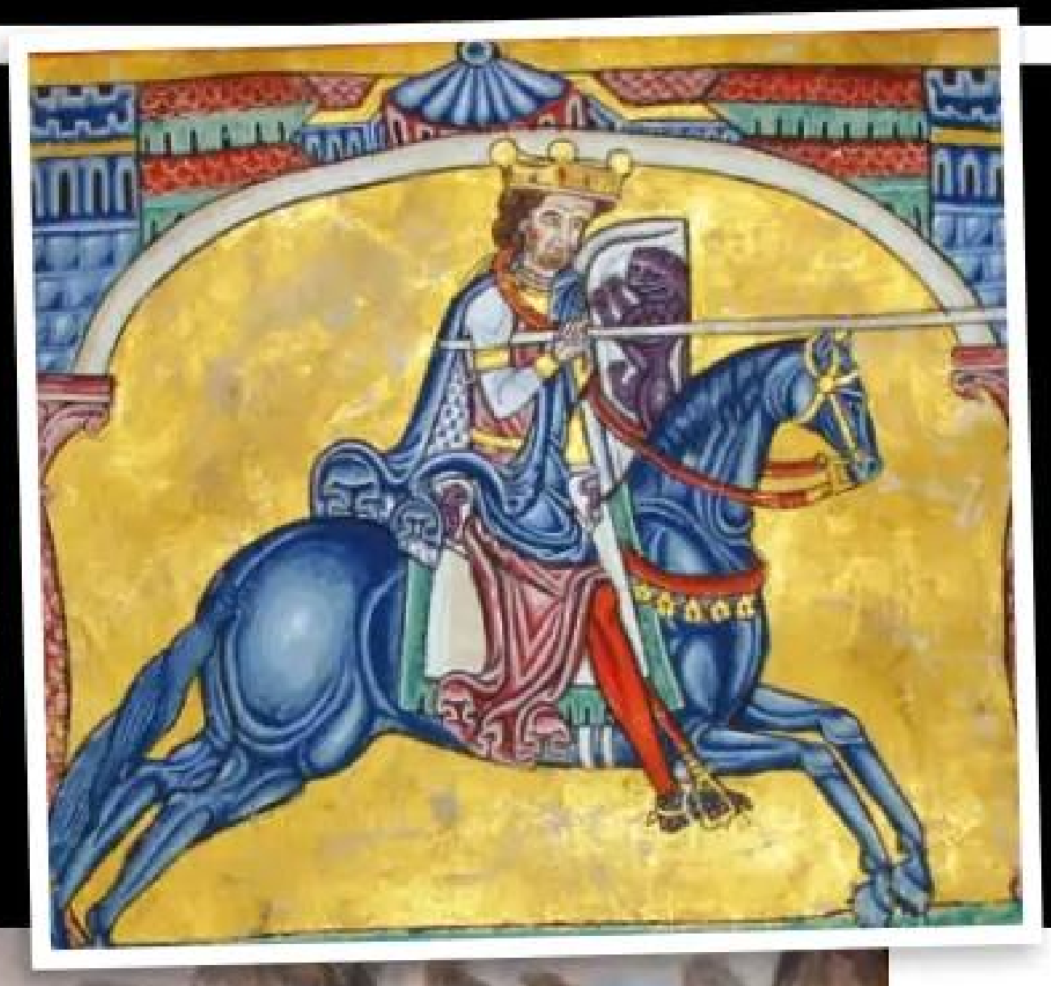
10TH – 12TH CENTURY

As people in western Europe began to move to walled cities many urban centres formed councils and corporations with elected positions to protect trade and town rights.

CORTES OF LEÓN

1188

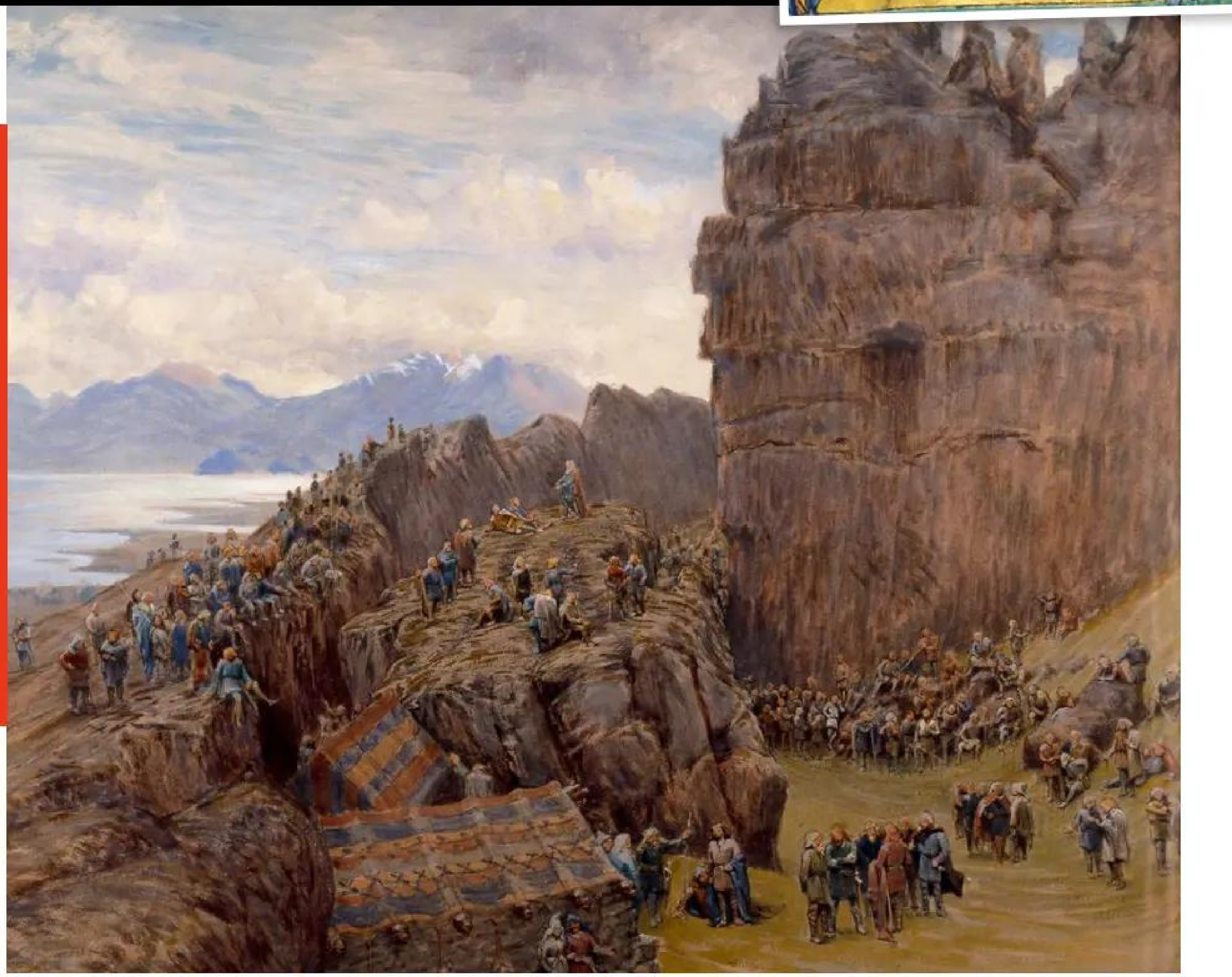
When the kingdom of Aragon was threatened with invasion, Alfonso IX (right) summoned a cortes, or council. For the first time this council was attended by non-noble representatives from cities.



930 THE ALTHING

ICELAND

When around 10,000 Norse settlers arrived in Iceland in the years after 870 CE there was no central authority and the island was not under the control of any existing king. At first there was plenty of land to be claimed but disputes soon arose between settlers and so a system of local 'things' formed to enable the discussion of important matters without recourse to violence and vendetta. In 930 CE an Althing, a thing open to all free men of Iceland was called. At the Althing the most important local leaders would meet to decide judicial cases and discuss laws, under the gaze of those they governed.

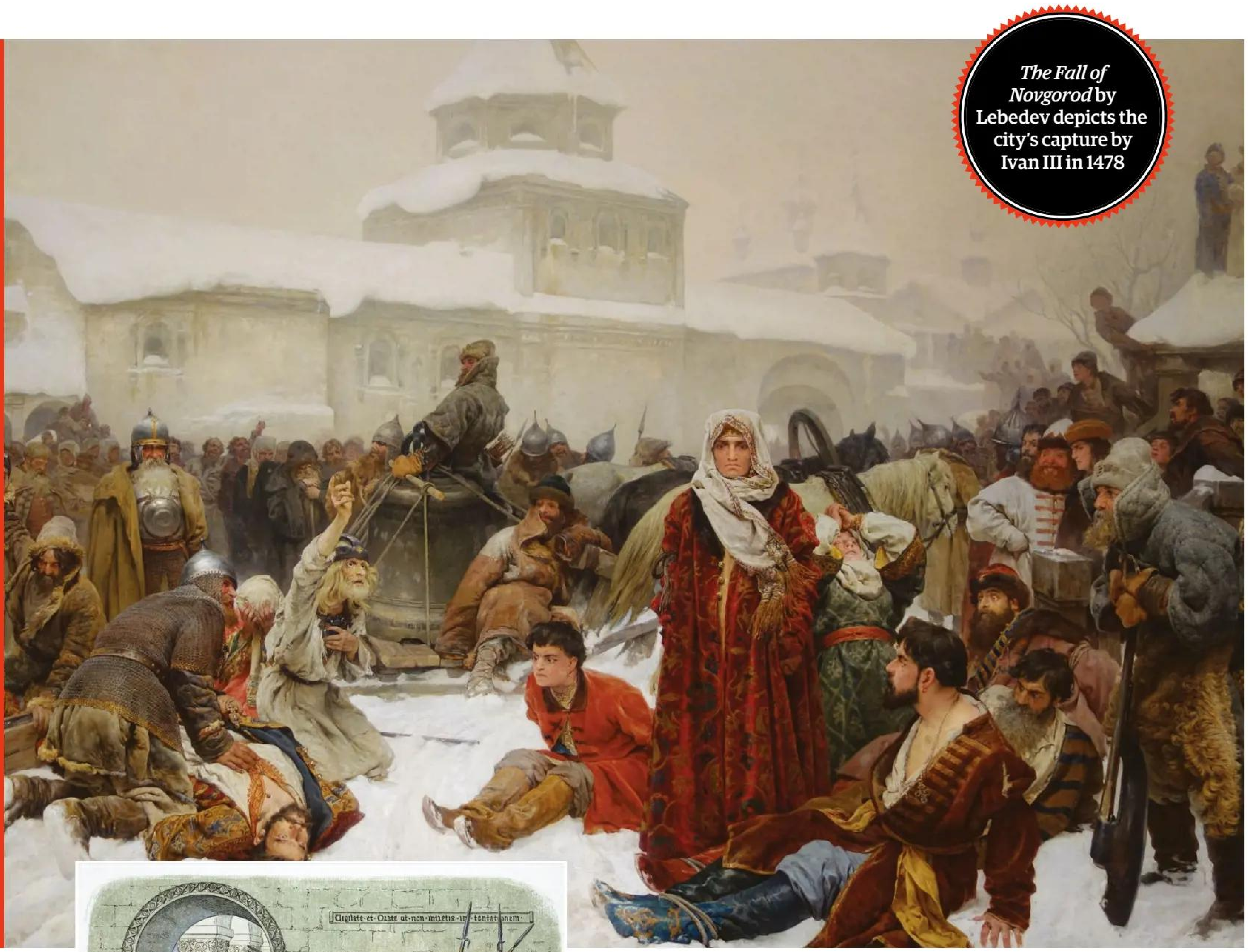


12-15TH c.

NOVGOROD REPUBLIC

RUSSIA

In 1136 the people of the city of Novgorod tired of their ruling Prince, Vsevolod, and drove him from the city. The large territory of the city-state in northern Russia was governed from then on by princes and officials chosen by the people. Town meetings where decisions were made were attended by people from the highest levels of society to the poorest of labourers. The city maintained the position of prince, often inviting princes from neighbouring states to fill the role, but they could be appointed and dismissed by the population when needed. Novgorod lost its independence when it was annexed by Ivan III of Moscow in 1478.

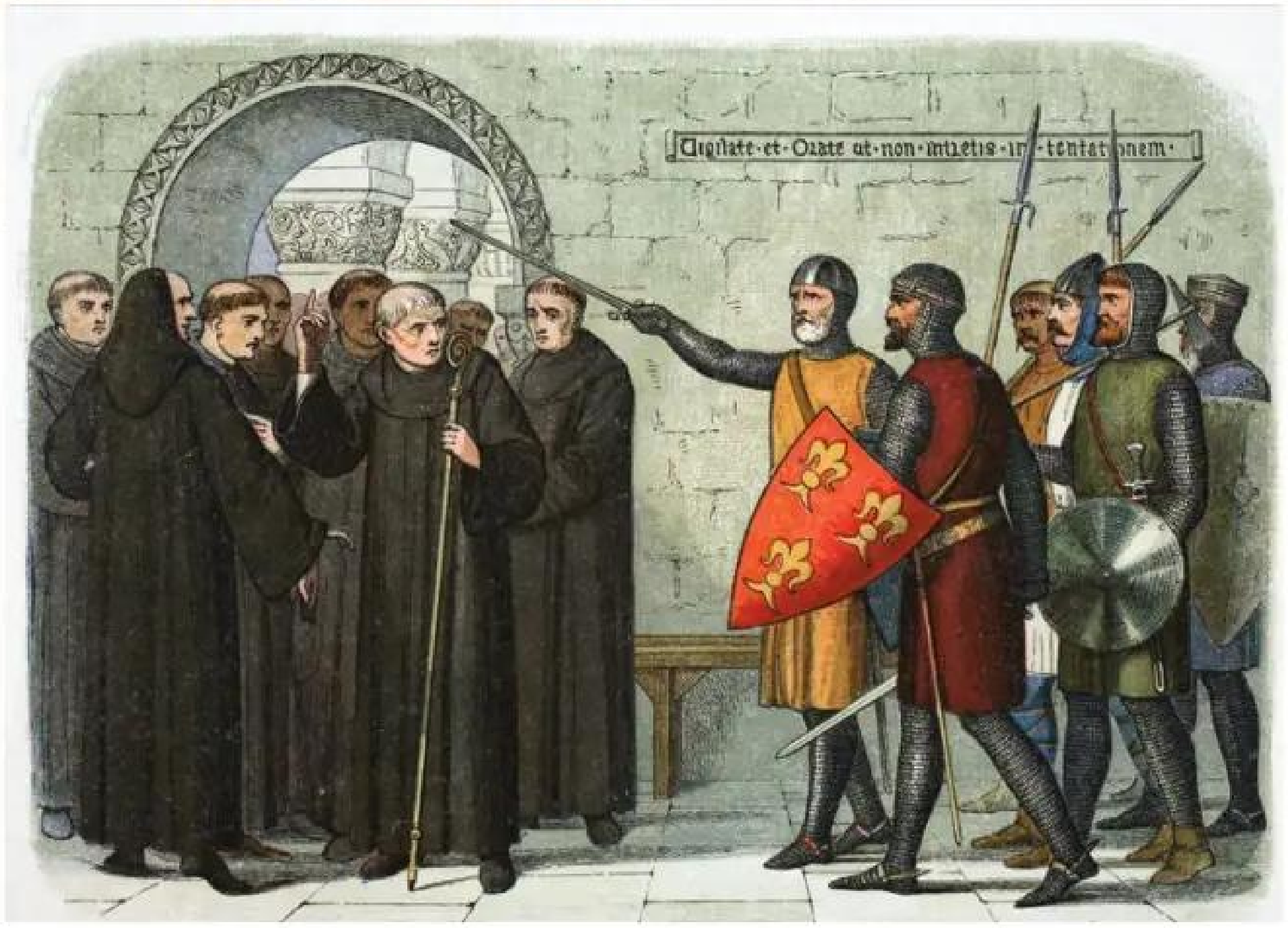


The Fall of Novgorod by Lebedev depicts the city's capture by Ivan III in 1478

ELECTING AN ARCHBISHOP

1205

The Archbishop of Canterbury in England was traditionally elected by the monks of Christ Church. The 1205 election was contested by King John, but the monks simply elected a second Archbishop in opposition to the monarch.



POLISH PARLIAMENT

1493

A sejm (government assembly) in Poland featured a meeting of the king, a chamber formed of bishops and nobles, and a lower house of indirectly elected representatives of the gentry and cities.

1215

13TH c.

14TH c.

15TH c.

REVOLT FOR VOTES

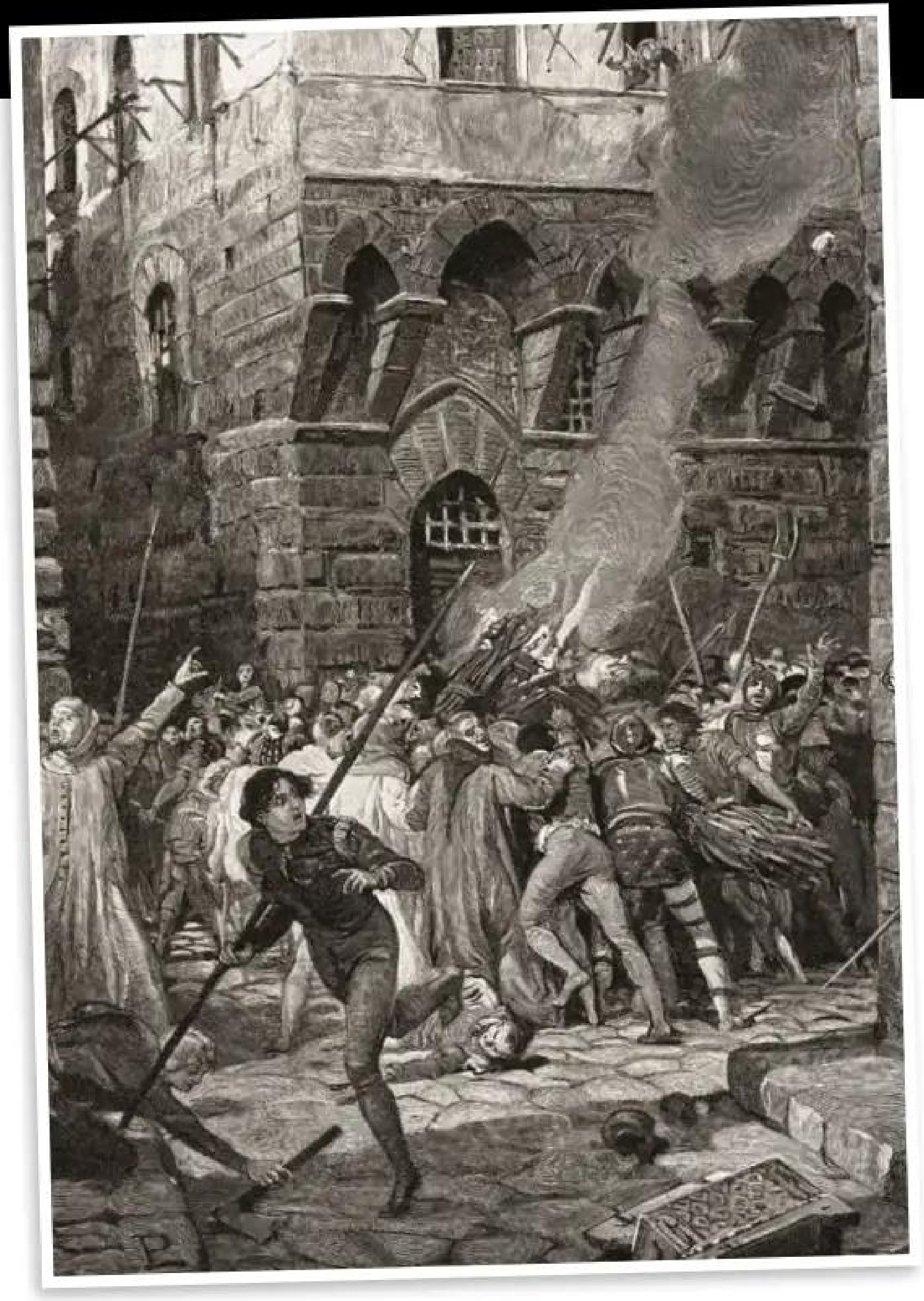
1378

The council of the Republic of Florence was dominated by members of the major trade guilds, but in 1378 the wool workers who were not represented revolted (below) and created a reforming government.

TLAXCALA GOVERNMENT

14TH CENTURY

The Tlaxcallan state in what is now Mexico was governed by a council of men who had performed notable services for the people. These men came from both noble and lower class families.

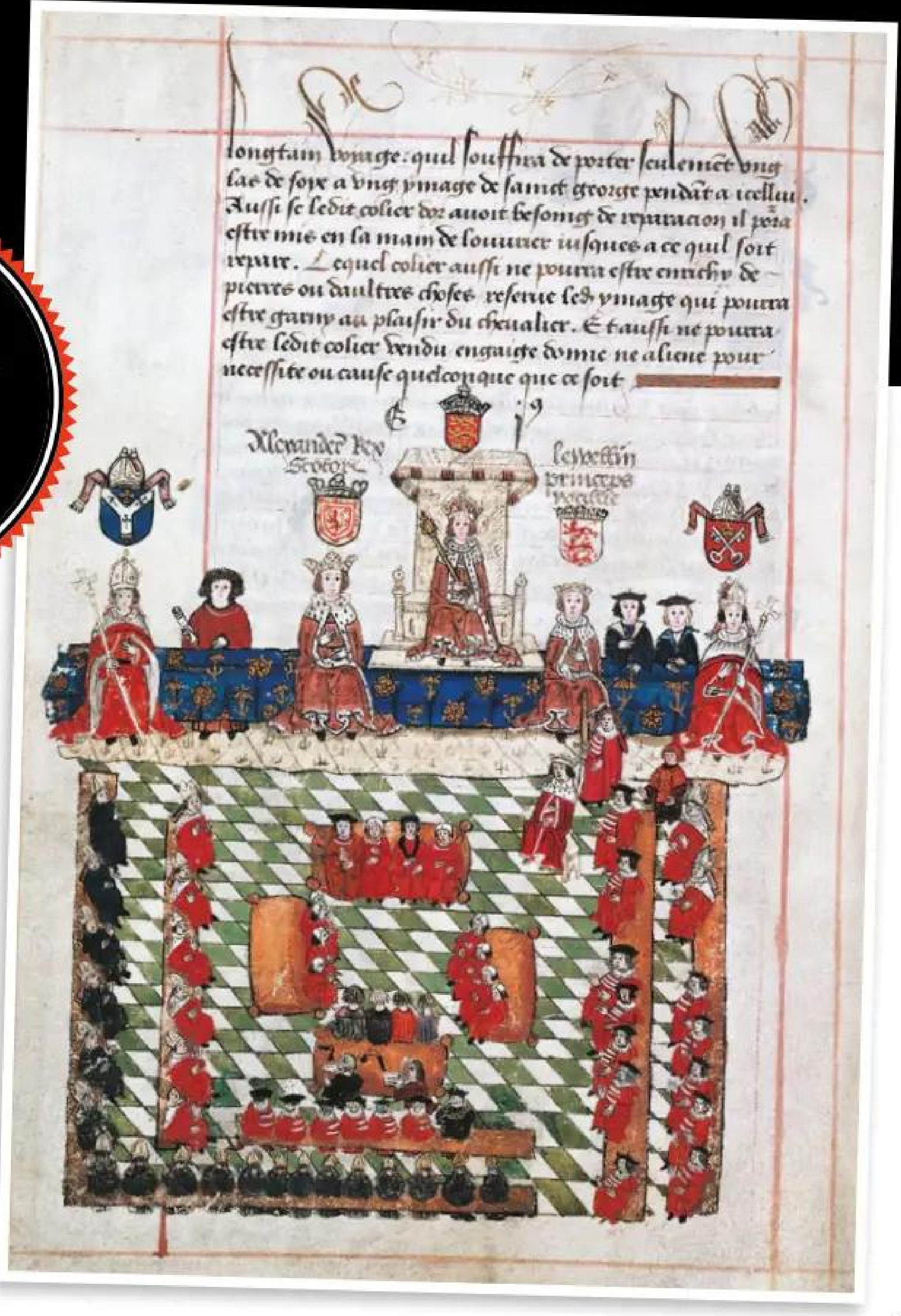


13TH c.

THE MODEL PARLIAMENTS

ENGLAND

The English Parliament grew out of councils held between kings and their powerful vassals. In the 13th century the gentry and lower classes became more wealthy and if taxes were to be imposed on them without causing civil strife, it was decided to seek their consent. The rebel baron Simon de Montfort summoned knights and representatives of towns to a, legally dubious, parliament in 1265 to discuss wide-ranging reforms. Under Edward I, the attendance of these burgesses at parliaments became the norm after the parliament of 1295, sometimes called the Model Parliament because from then onward the 'commons' would have a role in government.



Edward I presiding over parliament, circa 1278

Getty Images, Alamy, Wikimedia Commons

VIKING DEMOCRACY

How a bunch of looting Vikings established the first representative assemblies

Written by Edoardo Albert

Vikings. It's a word that conjures up various associations – plundering, raiding, longships, axes, TV shows, horned helmets (although the last one's not true and the TV shows stretch history just a little). But along with all the stuff that makes for binge-worthy programmes, there was another side to Viking culture: things.

A 'thing' was the assembly of free men where the Norse came together to enact laws and hear cases. The word derives from an Old Norse word (þing) and there are related words in German (Ding), Dutch (ding) and the Scandinavian languages (ting), all of which philologists believe come from an original root word that meant an 'appointed time'.

The thing was a vital part of Norse culture (in Norse, 'viking' is actually a verb rather than a noun: men went off viking, to trade, raid and plunder). In a world with no police force nor even an official army, the only recourse for a family who lost a son murdered or had a daughter raped was the blood feud.

The blood feud was a way to inflict penalty on transgressors: injury for injury, blood for blood, life for life. But as the same obligation to revenge injured members of the family applied to both families, then the feud had the effect of producing conflicts that dragged on for generations, with grandchildren carrying on a vendetta begun by their grandparents.

The things were an attempt to find another way to settle disputes. To ensure that everyone could attend, things were usually held in some place that people knew about and that was easy to get to. For instance, the thing on the Isle of Man took place on a prominent hill, the Althing in Iceland at the head of a lake. Things were also held regularly, so people would have a chance to settle disputes by some method other than feud.

The assembly was presided over by the chieftain of the district, but by his side – and even more important for the functioning of the thing – was the lawspeaker. The Norse had no written culture (they did write runes but these were only used for short, generally gnomic inscriptions) so the law had to be committed to memory. This was the job of the lawspeaker. At the start of the thing, he

Alamy

would recite the laws and, when disputes arose, be there to state the relevant law again.

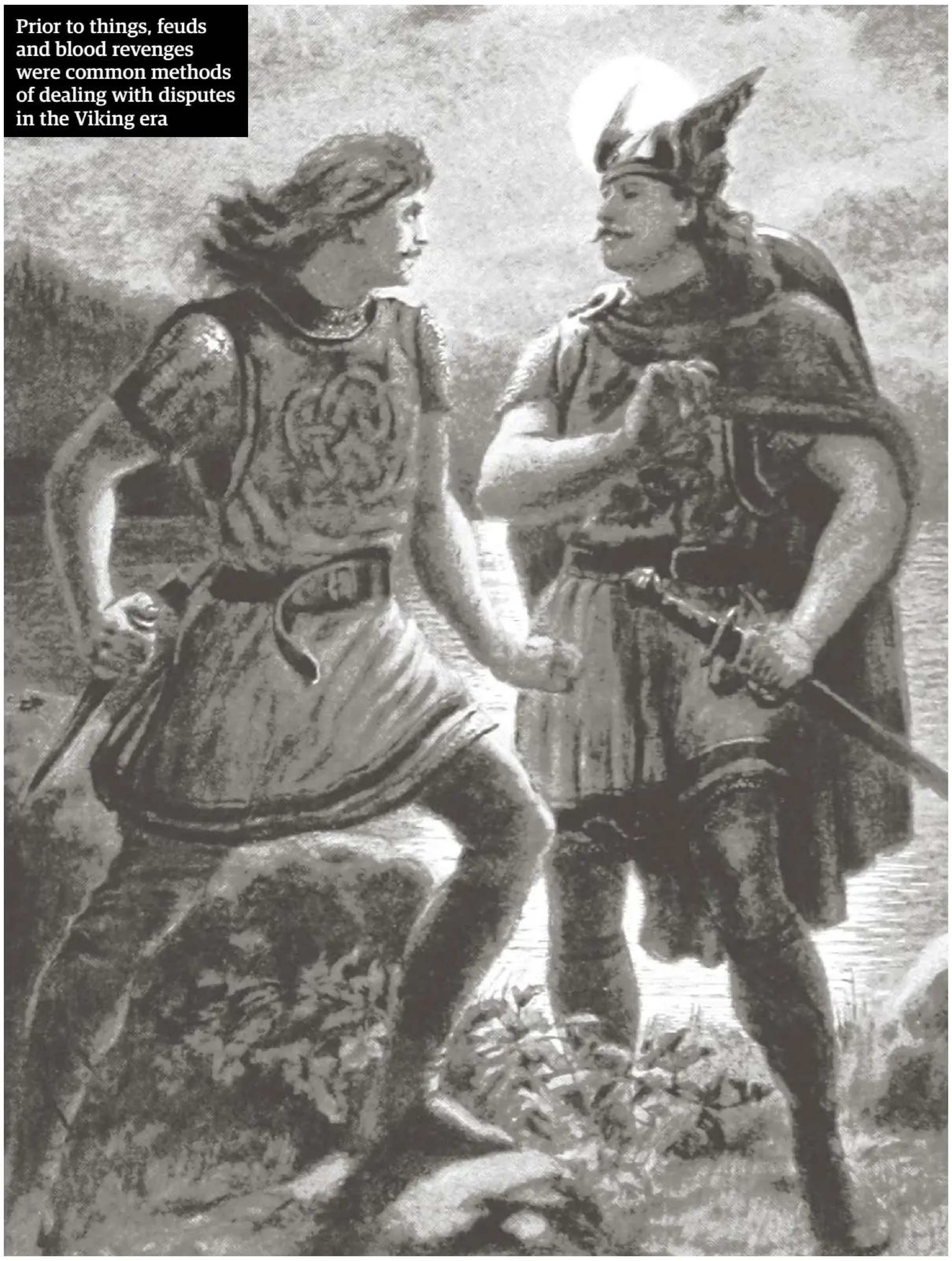
Given the power dynamics of the time, things were generally dominated by the most powerful local families. But even so, any free man was able to bring and state his case at the thing, allowing him to be heard by all his peers. (There is evidence that women also attended things, but they were generally excluded from rendering judgements.)

Early Norse society was decentralised. Local things gathered to sort out local problems. A man bringing a case before the thing could elect to settle the case through combat. There were strict rules to these combats that determined the area on which the fight took place (often the size of a cloak laid flat upon the ground), how many shields might be used during the fight (there were one-, two- and three-shield duels) and what determined the outcome of the duel (from first blood to the death of one of the combatants).

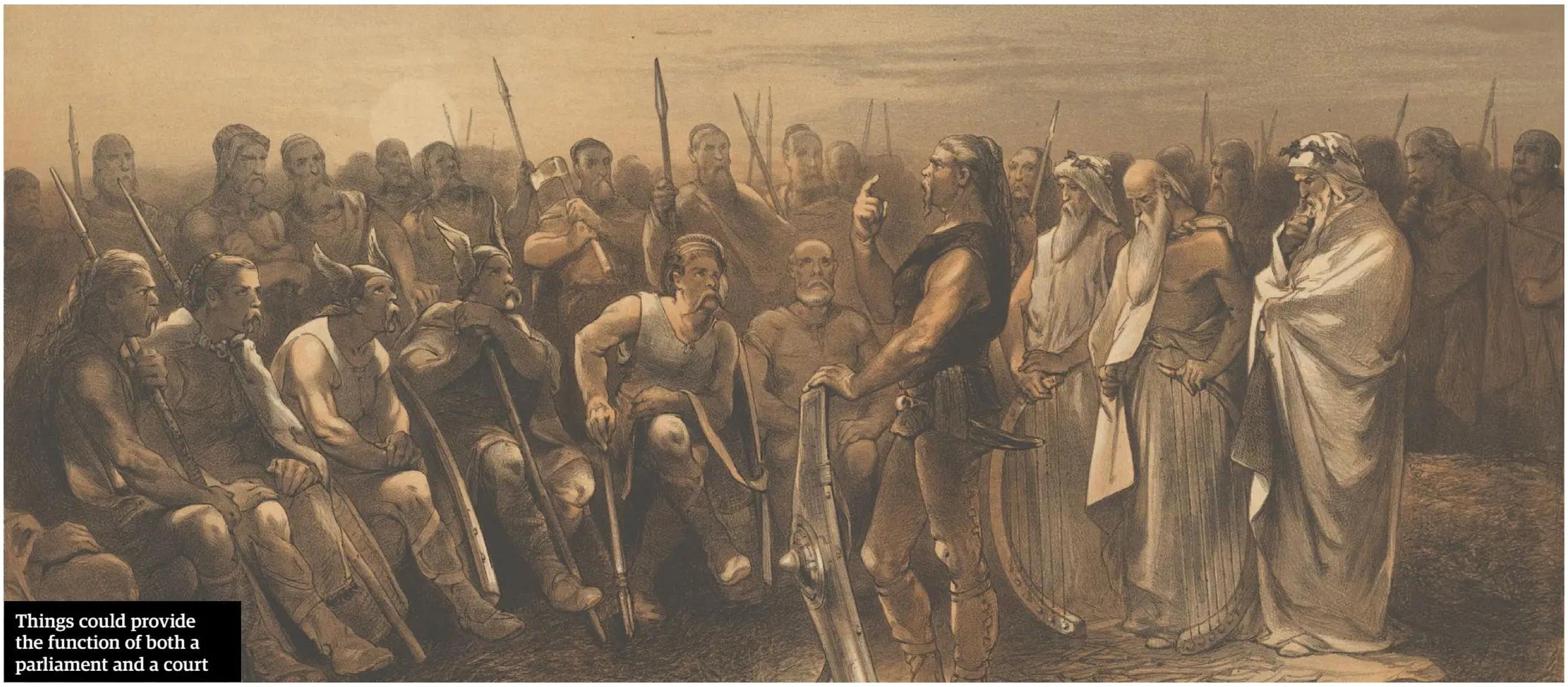
But cases might also be settled by the judgement of the thing. In these cases, the thing had a range of punishments it could impose on the guilty. These started with fines. As these laws developed, a strict system of payments for injury was put into place, with men and women of higher social rank requiring higher recompense than their social inferiors. In Viking England, for example, the life of a nobleman was worth 1,200 shillings while the compensation for taking the life of an ordinary free man was 200 shillings. Itemised lists of injury compensation developed, so by the 9th century, knocking out a front tooth cost eight shillings (a back tooth, being less visible, cost four shillings) while striking off someone's testicles cost 80 shillings.

In addition to fines, things could declare a defendant as 'outlaw'. This was a terrible punishment, as it put a man outside the law. No hand would be raised to help him and any hand could be raised against him. Men declared outlaw generally had to go into exile; remaining in their homeland was a sentence of death.

As Norse society became more organised, larger regional things developed to which difficult local cases could be referred. These in turn were later passed upwards again, to the assembly that advised the king himself. Indeed, the supreme legislature in Norway today is called the Storting, which means, literally, the Big Thing! What began as low-key meetings of the men of the local area sorting out their problems has come a long, long way.



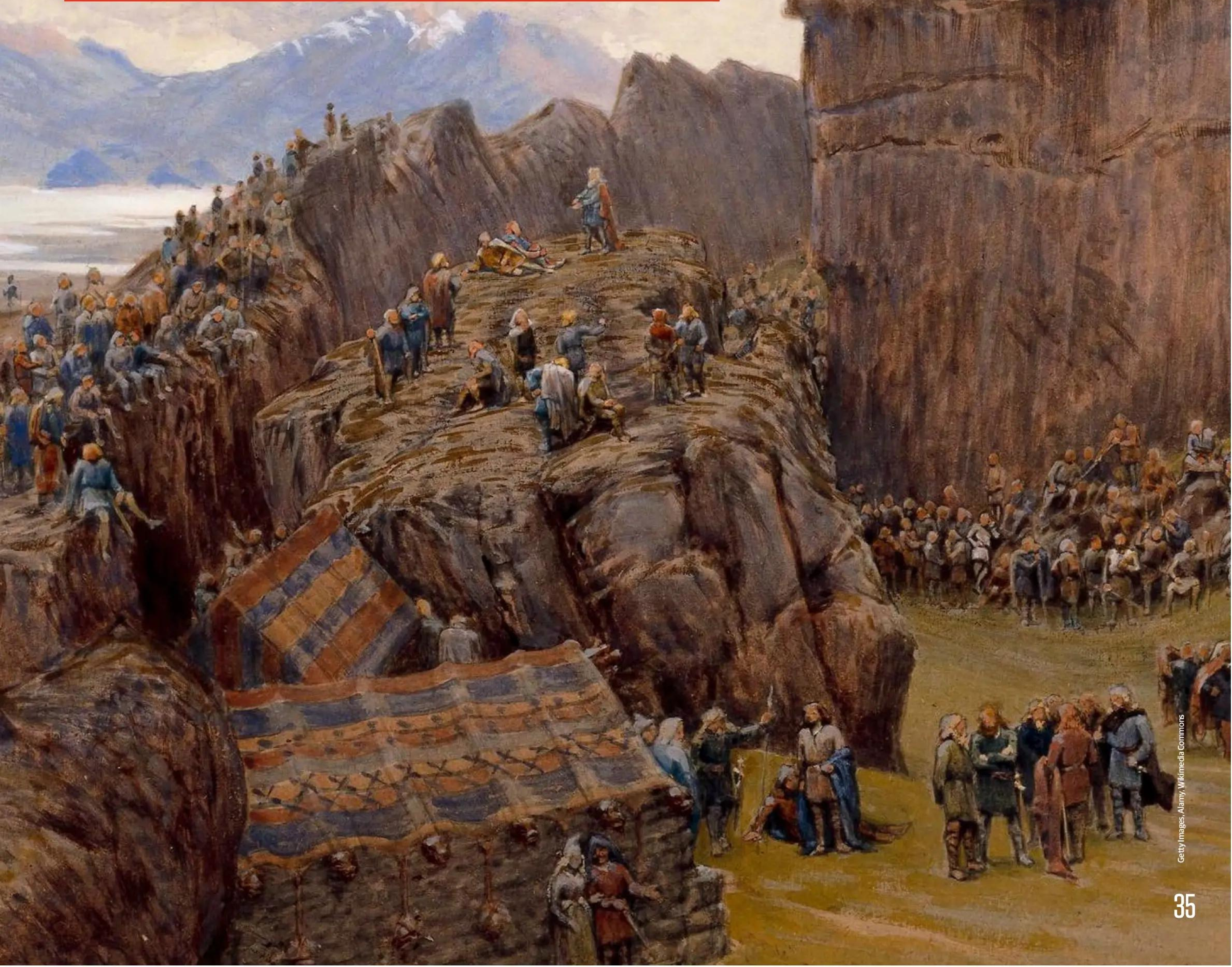
Prior to things, feuds and blood revenges were common methods of dealing with disputes in the Viking era



Things could provide the function of both a parliament and a court

THE FIRST PARLIAMENT

The Althing, Iceland's supreme parliament, is the direct descendant of the thing that first met in 930 on the Þingvellir, the 'Thing Fields', at the head of the largest lake in Iceland. As such, it is the oldest parliament in the world, although the Althing was shut in 1800 by the Danish crown, which ruled Iceland at the time, only to be restored in 1845. The site of the original Þingvellir was designated a National Park in 1930 and declared a World Heritage Site in 2004. Its origin is well recorded: Grímur Geitskör was given the job of finding a suitable site for the thing and he chose Þingvellir because it was easily accessible to west, north and south, plus the land itself was public land, its previous owner having been condemned for murder. The thing first met there in the summer of 930. The lawspeaker proclaimed the law from the Lögberg ('Law Rock', pictured); the thing was summoned and dissolved from the Law Rock, and judgements rendered there. Clustered around the Law Rock, the Drowning Pool and Gallows Rock give vivid testimony to some of the punishments available to the Althing. But the Althing was not just about law: much of the population gathered during the assembly to meet and greet, swap tales and look for wives, to gossip, buy and sell. So not much different from parliaments today.



A painting by W G Collingwood, depicting the original site of the Althing at Löberg

Getty Images, Alamy, Wikimedia Commons

The design of the Haudenosaunee flag was inspired by a symbol of unity between the tribes

THE IROQUOIS CONFEDERACY

Democratic indigenous societies emerged independently across the globe all throughout history – not just in Europe, as has long been thought

Written by Arisa Loomba

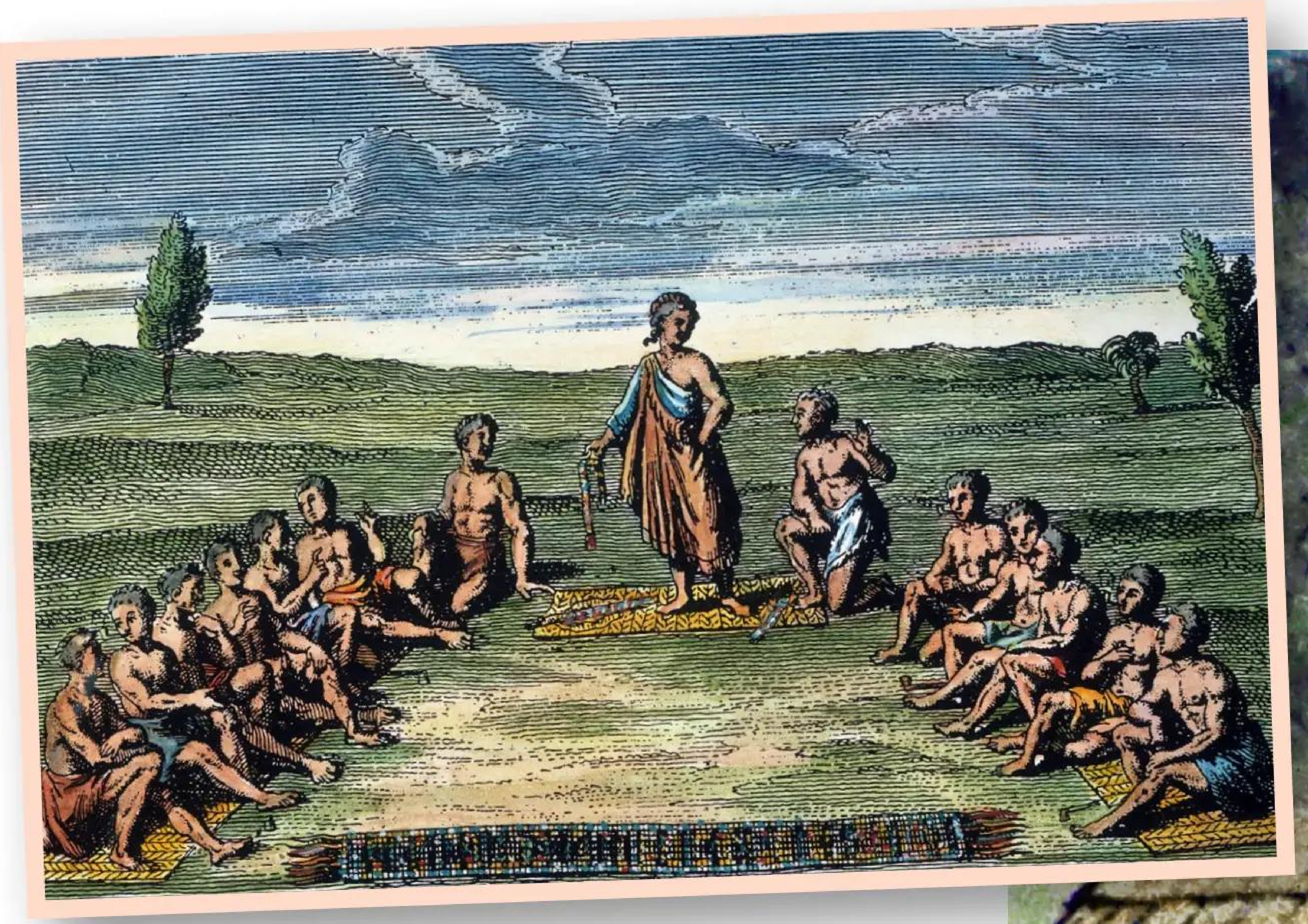
Indigenous North American groups have long tried to explain the forms of democratic governance that they bequeathed to the modern world, though it is only recently that people have begun to listen. The Iroquois Confederacy, also known as the Six Nations, or the Haudenosaunee (People of the Long House), is a famed example of such indigenous democracy. The Haudenosaunee played a strategic role in colonial struggles between the French and British for mastery of the North American continent, and are believed to have played a highly influential role in the pioneering of American independence and early democracy.

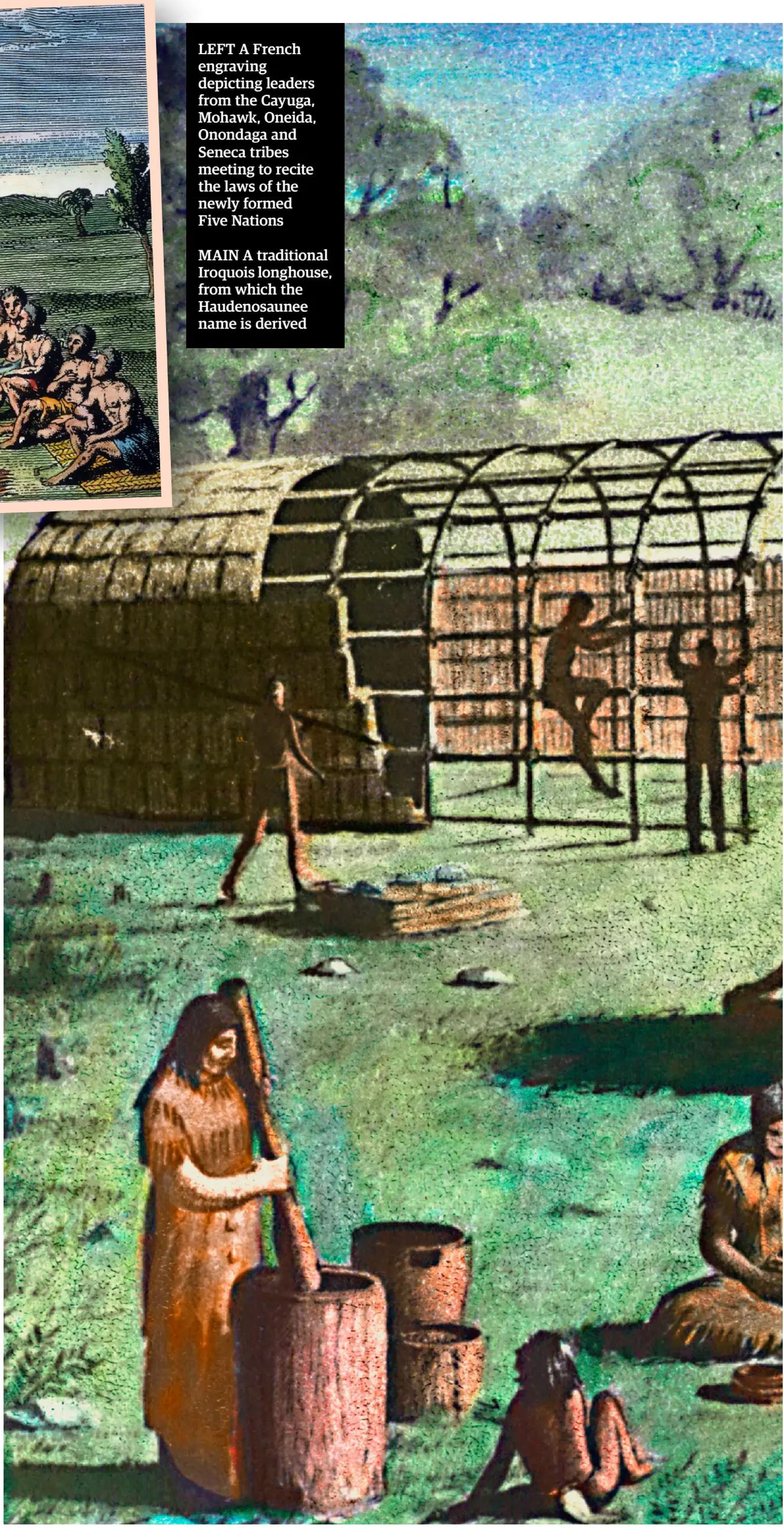
The Haudenosaunee became the most formidable power in the region in the century before the American Revolution. Remarkably, they triumphed at significantly halting and containing European expansion, resisting complete takeover of their land – a rare achievement among indigenous groups. They originally occupied lands stretching from what is today northern Pennsylvania into New York and up into lower Ontario and Quebec in Canada. At their height, they controlled or had settled as far north as Lake Ontario, as far south as the Carolinas, as far east as the Hudson River, and as far west as Michigan and Illinois, frequently warring with other tribes.

They were a warrior culture, unique among the many other Native American tribes and confederacies for the complex democratic structures and political, economic, and military self-sufficiency. The Confederacy is made up of six nations: the Mohawk (The People of the Flint), Oneida (People of the Standing Stone), Onondaga (People of the Hills),

A depiction of Hiawatha, a co-founder of the Iroquois Confederacy

Getty Images, Alamy





LEFT A French engraving depicting leaders from the Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga and Seneca tribes meeting to recite the laws of the newly formed Five Nations

MAIN A traditional Iroquois longhouse, from which the Haudenosaunee name is derived

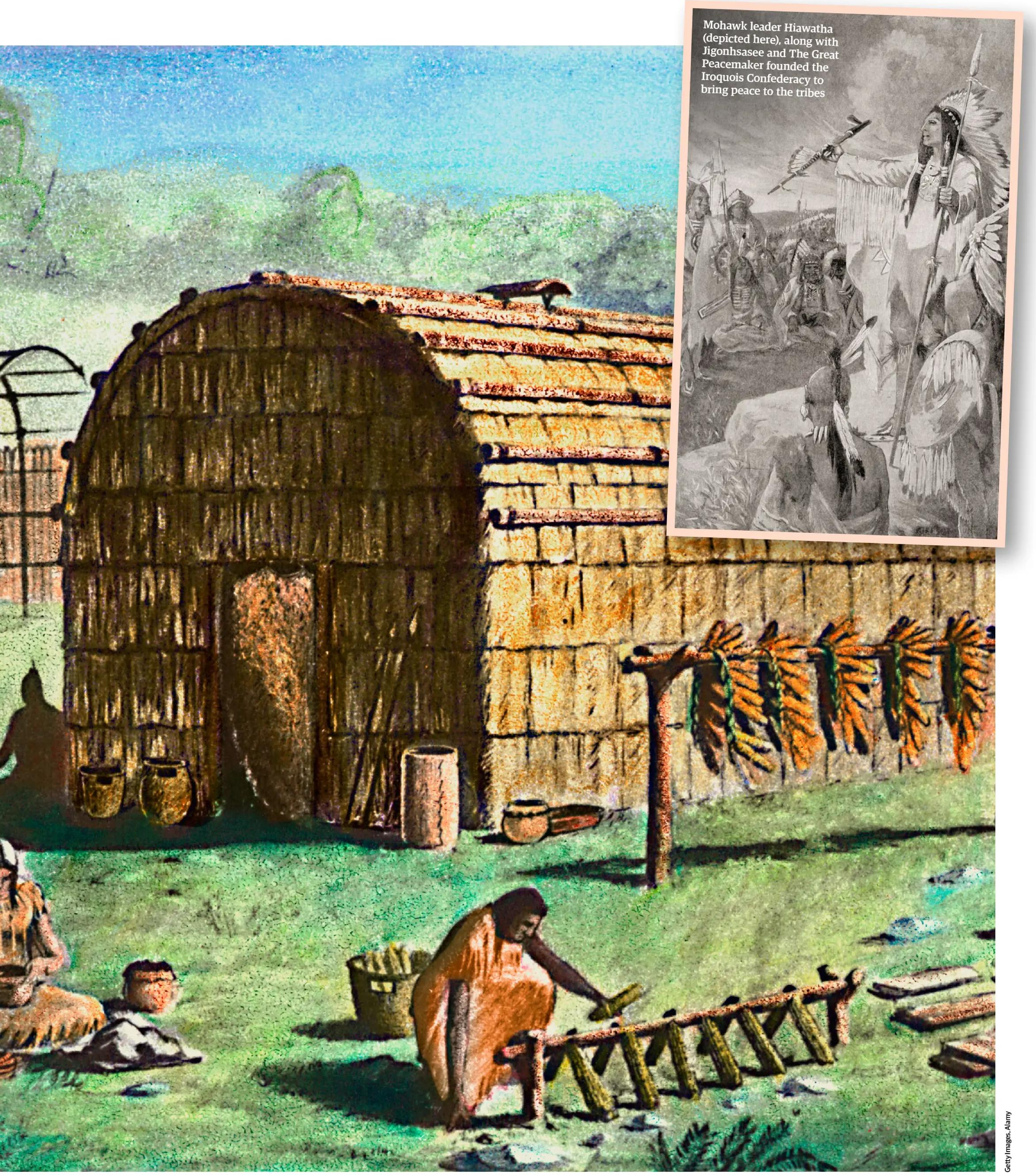
Cayuga (People of the Great Swamp) and the Seneca (People of the Great Hill). In 1722, the Tuscarora (People of the Shirt) joined to create the six nations that were officially recognised as a confederacy at Albany, New York in that year. Each group is further divided into internal clans named after animals. Archaeological evidence suggests these groups may have existed in the region since as early as 4000 BCE.

The Iroquois Confederacy entailed a spiritual union of close kinship ties, strong community and a duty towards nature. It was a rich culture, enjoying sports, intricate beadwork and many other forms of art, play, music and oral storytelling. In this matrilineal society, women were – and are – central to the passing on of lineage and the Confederacy's peaceful functioning. They had far more rights than American and European women, and far earlier.

America's first democracy emerged in the year 1142, when the Great Law of Peace, or Gayanashagowa – one of the governing principles of the Confederacy, defining its structure and decision-making processes – was established. It consists of 117 rules recorded on strings of wampum beads, a common communication system in Native America. According to legend, during a time of frequent war and destruction the prophet 'Peacemaker' or Dekanawidah, and his ally Hiawatha, were sent to Earth by the Creator to unite the tribes, promoting peace, righteousness and order. The union created a larger framework of harmony, alliance and collective decision-making, protecting one another from invasion.

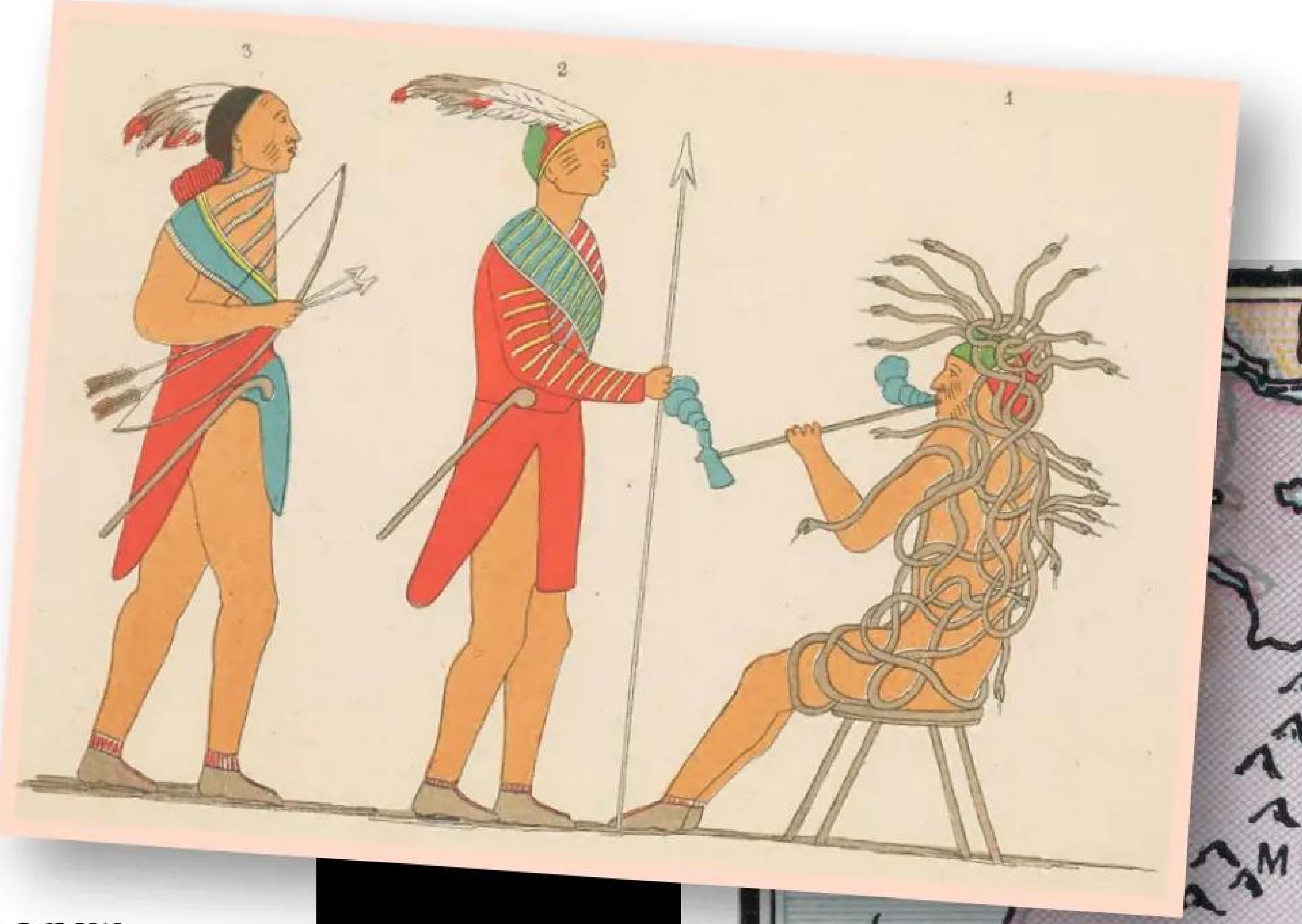
Unified but still autonomous, each nation has its own council run by a group of chiefs, who are chosen by the clan mother of each clan. Councils deal with nations' internal affairs, but all 50 chiefs come together at a Grand Council to resolve larger inter-tribe issues. Each tribe has one vote at Grand Council, and decisions pass back and forth within the Long House until unanimous agreement is reached. Decisions are made with consideration for future generations, a principle known as 'the Seventh Generation', foregrounding a responsibility to preserve cultural practices, environmental stewardship, and communal values for the benefit of future descendants, from whom present Haudenosaunee are borrowing the land. The Iroquois Confederacy is therefore one of the oldest and most ancient continuous participatory democracies, with a 'written' constitution, in the history of the world.

The Haudenosaunee's strategic trading, alliances, and military actions played a significant role in shaping colonial America



Mohawk leader Hiawatha (depicted here), along with Jigonhsasee and The Great Peacemaker founded the Iroquois Confederacy to bring peace to the tribes

Getty Images, Alamy

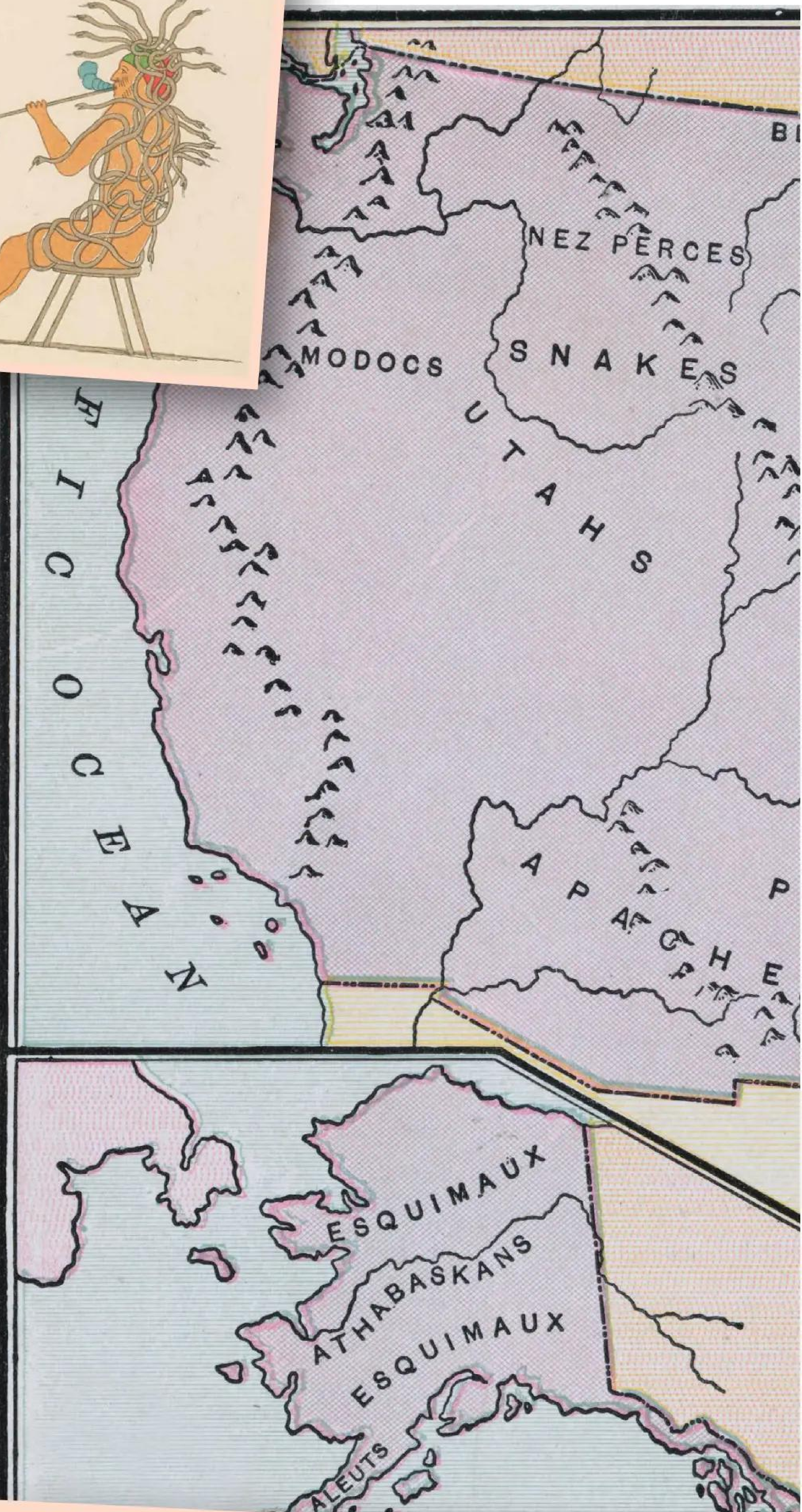


and the course of American democracy. The Haudenosaunee system of participatory democracy is thought to have influenced and inspired the Founding Fathers, particularly Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, in writing the American constitution and guiding the new nation. In the 1730s and 40s, Benjamin Franklin made great profits by printing the proceedings of land and trade negotiations between the Haudenosaunee and the English, and they both intrigued and concerned him as to the future of British America. In 1750 he became the Indian commissioner for Pennsylvania, and through this, began to imagine a new beginning for the American colonies. He admired and respected the Haudenosaunee's vision of a fair community and society, compared to the authoritarian and repressive English.

Parallels between the Great Law of Peace and the US constitution are many, with both stressing unity, peace and individual freedom, while discouraging the class divisions on which English society centred. The structure of the bicameral US Congress and its checks and balances are seen by some as similar to the Haudenosaunee's Grand Council with its younger and elder brothers from each clan coming together, who can only hold one position, all overseen by the lifelong clan mothers who have the last say, to balance overall governance while maintaining the autonomy of individual entities within it. The Haudenosaunee's symbol is a bundle of five arrows symbolising the five nations' togetherness (this was before it became the Six Nations), while the US seal depicts an eagle grasping 13 arrows – the original 13 colonies of the United States.

However, this connection is contested due to a lack of evidence, for while there may have been mutual influence, the Founding Fathers' understanding of Haudenosaunee governance might have been limited or misinterpreted. It makes sense that the Revolutionaries were attracted by the Iroquois system's offering of an alternative society that signalled how different America wished to be from its English roots. Yet, some scholars and

ABOVE According to legend, the first Iroquois ruler, Tadodaho (right), had a fearsome reputation; his unruly appearance led to the belief that snakes writhed in his hair

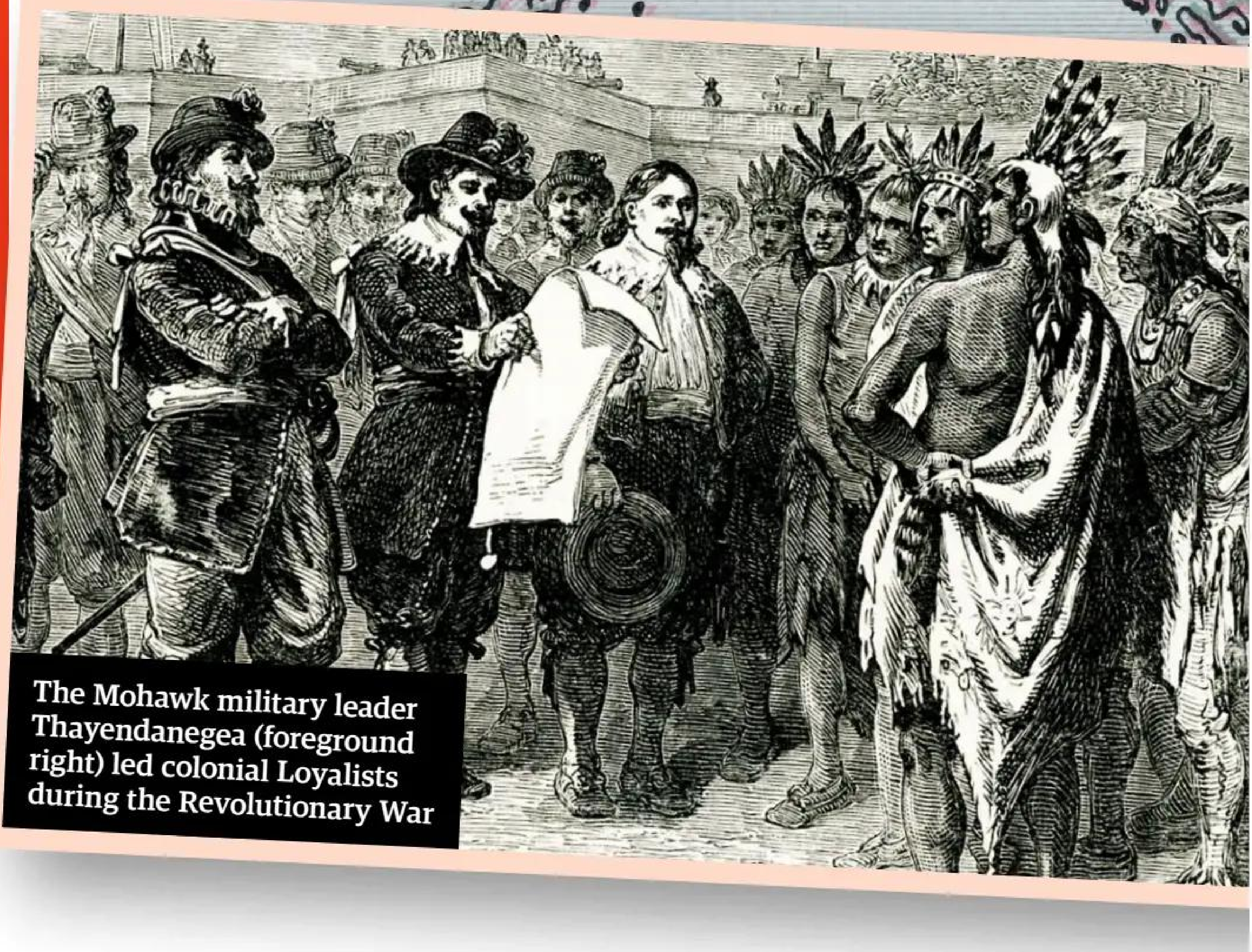


RIGHT A map showing the territories of Native American tribes. The Iroquois resided in the east (shown in pink)

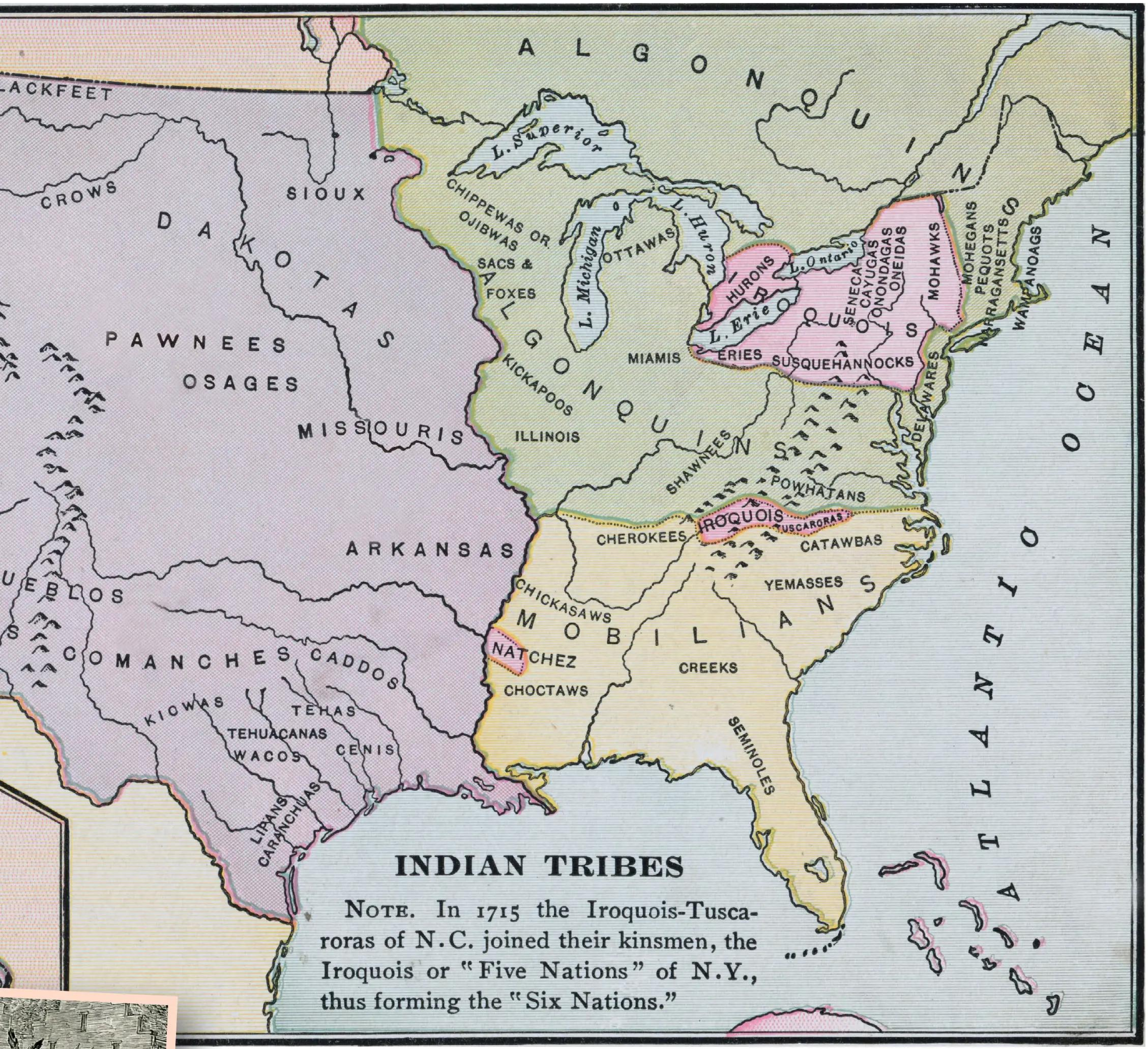
THE INDIGENOUS LEGACY: BEYOND THE IROQUOIS

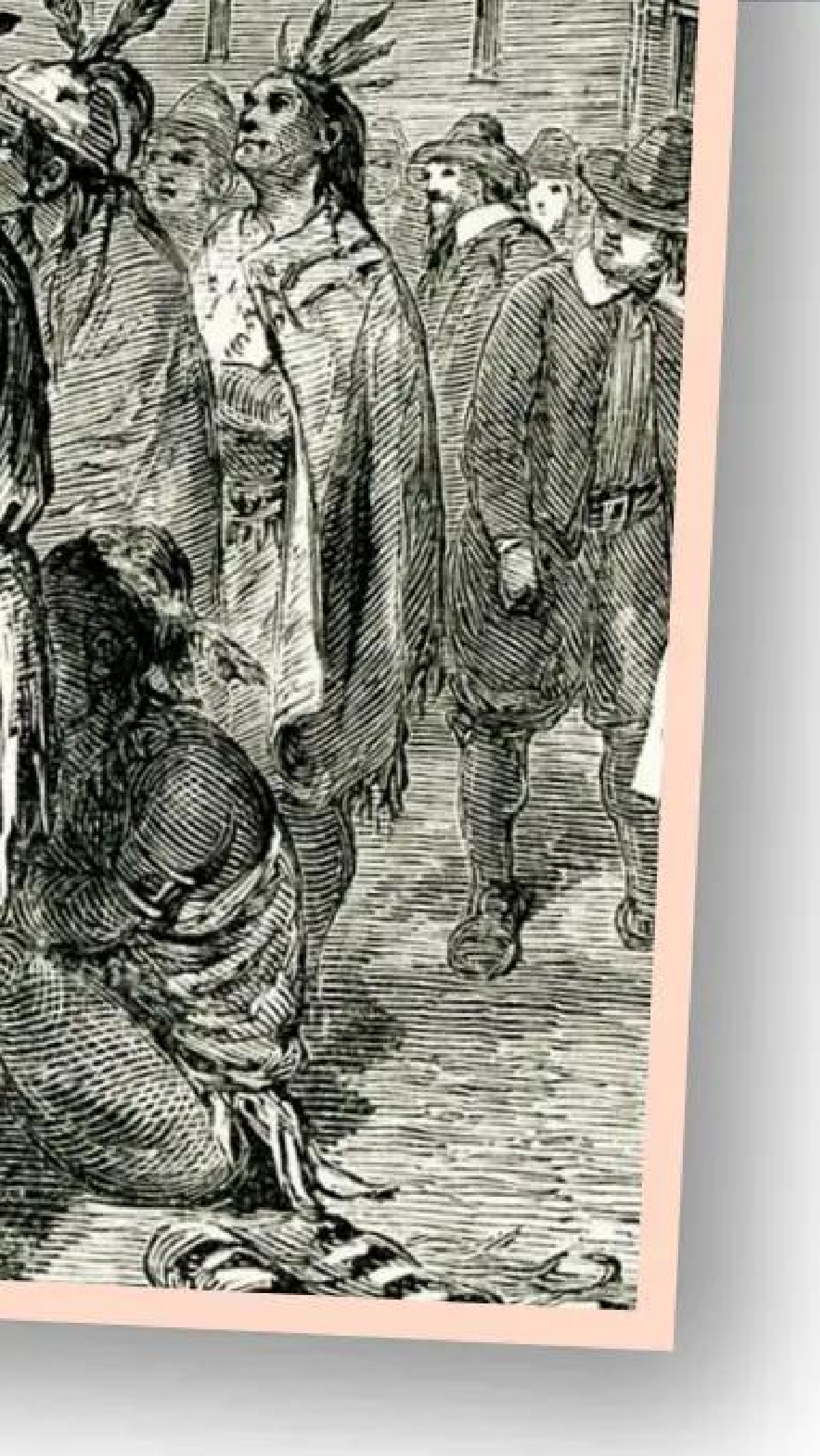
Some historians believe that there has been too much focus on the Iroquois, leading us to ignore other equally important Native American contributions to the modern world. Indeed, the indigenous tradition of democracy and respect spanned the continent far and wide: the Dakota, Three Fires, Wabanaki, Salish, Plains and many more indigenous peoples all formed their own versions of confederations, republics and democratic institutions. Muskogee-speaking groups across the southeast US also devised councils to allow for open debate forums and decision-making. In the southwest, the Pueblo were joined by a network of religious solidarity across very diverse societies, which dispersed power among them rather than keeping it centralised. The southeastern Cherokee people even banded together to form their own republican state as an act of resistance and rebellion against the American government that wanted to remove them from their land, or decimate them, so that they could use their land to farm rice in Georgia. The Cherokee system had one principal and one assistant chief, mimicking the US president and vice-presidential system. They created a police force and their own laws, a constitution and even a supreme court to prevent killings and keep peace. There were certainly limits to their democracy, for they, like the US, enslaved and cruelly oppressed Black and mixed-race people who had come to be part of Cherokee society, and the rights of women were also valued less than before European contact. They dreamed of being an independent democracy separate from the American nation, while the expansionist US was determined to crush this burgeoning republic.

In the 1830s and 40s the Cherokee were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands, being marched for miles at gunpoint into Oklahoma and pushed into inhumane conditions and inhospitable patches of land where they could not grow food or easily survive. Thousands died along the 'Trail of Tears'. But though the US attempted to eradicate Cherokee democracy and nationhood, the republic and its people have survived proudly and resiliently well into the present day.



The Mohawk military leader Thayendanegea (foreground right) led colonial Loyalists during the Revolutionary War


ALGONQUINS
L. Superior
L. Michigan
L. Huron
L. Ontario
L. Erie
ACKFEET
CROWS
SIOUX
DAKOTAS
PAWNEES
OSAGES
MISSOURIS
ARKANSAS
UEBLOS
COMANCHES
CADDOS
KIOWAS
TEHAS
TEHUACANAS
WACOS
CENIS
LIPANS
CARANCHUAS
CHIPPEWAS OR OJIBWAS
SACS & FOXES
OTTAWAS
MIAMIS
KICKAPOOS
ILLINOIS
SHAWNEES
HURONS
IROQUOIS
ERIES
SENECAS
CAYUGAS
ONONDAGAS
ONEIDAS
MOHAWKS
SUSQUEHANNOCKS
MOHEGANS
PEQUOTS
NARRAGANSETTS
WAMPANOAGS
DELAWARES
POWHATANS
IROQUOIS
TUSCARORAS
CHEROKEES
CATAWBAS
YEMASSES
MOBILIANS
CHICKASAWS
NATCHEZ
CHOCTAWS
CREEKS
SEMINOLES
ATLANTIC OCEAN
INDIAN TRIBES
NOTE. In 1715 the Iroquois-Tuscaroras of N.C. joined their kinsmen, the Iroquois or "Five Nations" of N.Y., thus forming the "Six Nations."



indigenous people believe that despite being inspired, much seems to have been lost in translation. The staunch American focus on individual freedoms and rights lacks some nuances from the Haudenosaunee's deeper commitment to living in interdependence, respect and altruism towards the natural world and fellow humans.

Regardless of the true extent of its influence, this story is just one of many demonstrating that democratic ideas were not solely a European innovation. The Haudenosaunee's long history of democracy, along with that of many other indigenous cultures, underscores the diverse origins of democratic principles. Acknowledging the significant role of indigenous societies in shaping democratic concepts is vital to understanding the broader history of democracy and respecting the rich heritage of Native American cultures as central to the history of the US.

Sadly, the American Revolution spelled disaster for the Iroquois, who were brutally defeated after some of the Six Nations sided with the British. They lost much of their lands, pushing them further north towards and into Canada, where they still live on reserve lands spanning the border today, with the autonomy to live out their traditional democracy and way of life. Also ironically, despite their gifts to democracy and their caretaking of the environment on lands they had occupied for thousands of years, it was Native Americans who were not allowed to become American citizens, nor have the vote themselves in US elections, until 1924.

Getty Images, Alamy, Wikimedia Commons

THE MANDEN CHARTER

Prince Sundiata Keita established the Mali Empire on a series of principles and values that helped define fundamental rights

Written by Callum McKelvie

The Mali Empire existed for nearly 400 years, from c.1226 to 1670 and was a vibrant source of wealth, trade and culture. Central to the rule of this kingdom was the Manden Charter. Now considered one of the first examples of a constitution outlining the rights of the governed, the charter discussed such topics as security, education and slavery. But just what are the origins of this monumental text? And what is its legacy today?

Sometime around 1235, two vast armies were said to have faced each other. These were the forces of the oppressive King Soumaoro Kanté of the Sosso peoples, and the army of Prince Sundiata Keita of the Mandinka peoples. Kanté had previously conquered the Mandinka but during the Battle of Kirina, the Prince was able to gain the upper hand. This victory led to the Prince founding the Mali Empire.

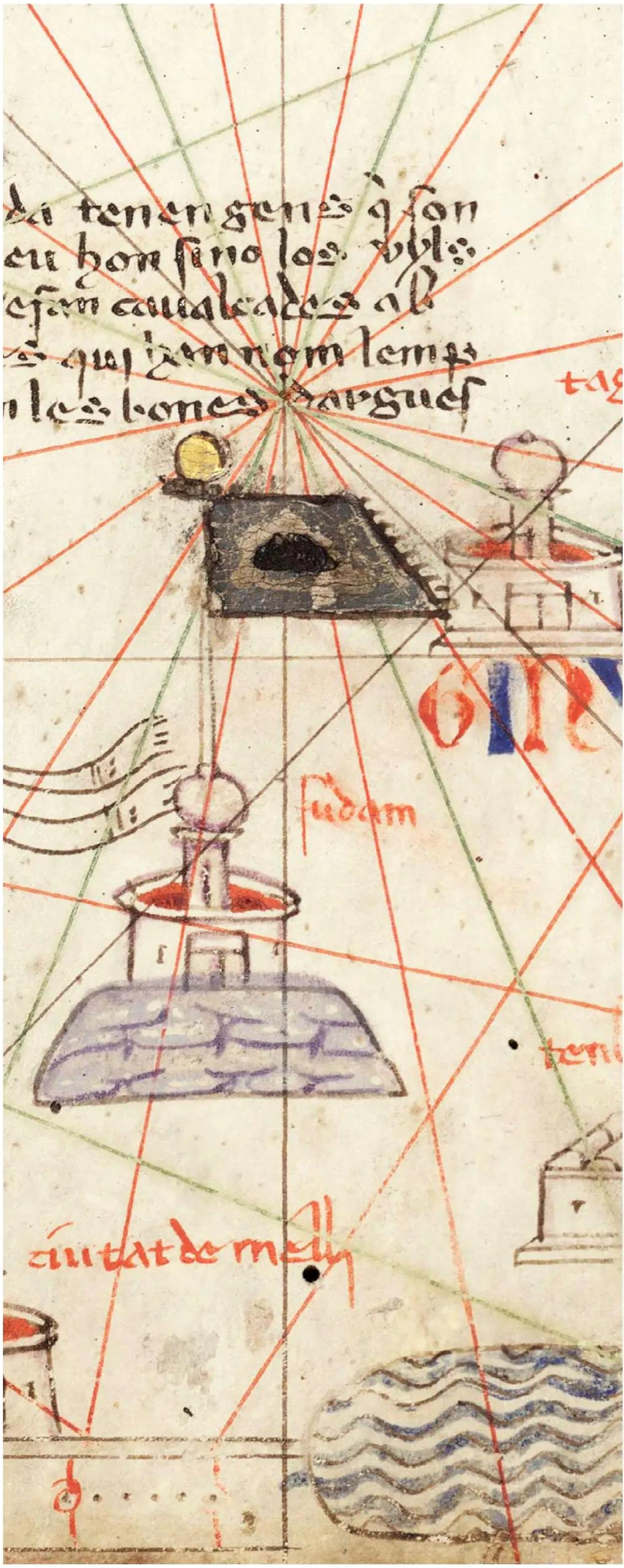
The Manden Charter is also known as the Kouroukan Fouga or Kurukan Fuga, which roughly translates to 'clearing on a rock' and takes its name from the place where Keita laid down the laws of the Mali Empire. The charter itself is ostensibly a series of principles on which his kingdom was to be run.

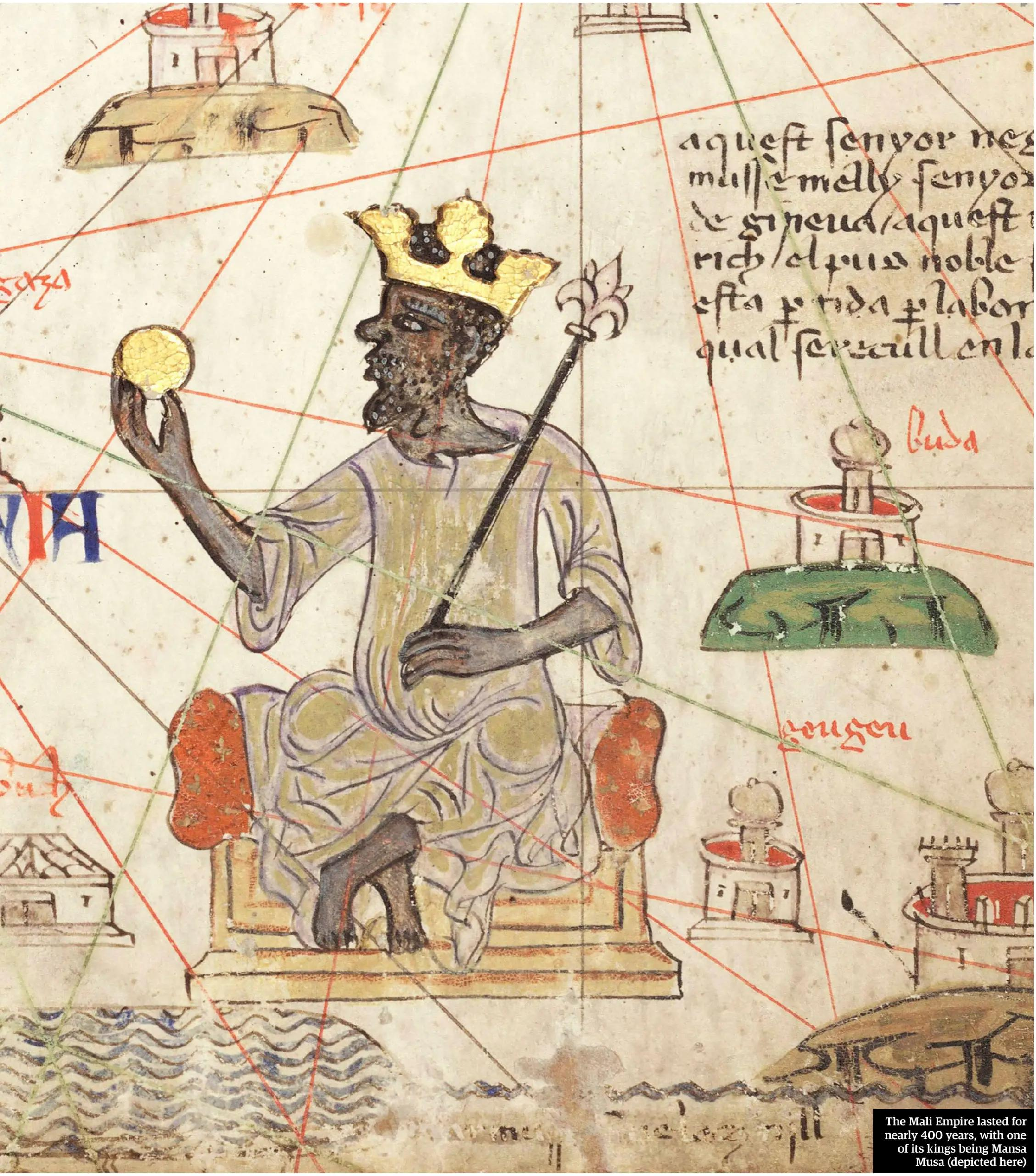
Our main source of information regarding the charter is the *Epic of Sundiata* poem. This is an ancient account of the founding of the Mali Empire that would have been passed down through generations of griots - oral historians who use music to tell their stories. These are considered important to West African culture, fulfilling an integral role in ensuring their narratives pass from generation to generation.

Throughout the centuries, efforts have been made to properly transcribe the *Epic of Sundiata*. However the oral nature of the *Epic* means that no definitive version of the story exists, the tale varying from griot to griot and presumably from generation to generation. Perhaps the most famous written version was first published in 1960 by Djibril Tamsir Niane, himself a descendant of griots. In 1997, a project headed by magistrate Siriman Kouyaté sought to reconstruct the charter, bringing together elements from several versions and reformatting it to read like a constitution. Despite some criticism, it was recognised by UNESCO.

One of the most noteworthy entries states slaves should not be mistreated, for; "we are the master of the slave but not the bag he carries". As well as principles, the charter dictated laws surrounding property and goods, but it also expressed clearly the necessity for compassion. For example, regarding the theft of food the charter states; "To satisfy one's hunger is not robbery if you don't take away anything in your bag or your pocket".

The charter still plays an important role and, according to UNESCO, "continues to regulate many aspects of Malinke community life in western Sub-Saharan Africa". Its final principle that; "everyone is bound to make effective their implementation", mirrors the belief central to many democracies that everyone is expected to follow the law but also play their part in society.




aqueſt ſenyor neg
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The Mali Empire lasted for nearly 400 years, with one of its kings being Mansa Musa (depicted here)

Alamy

MAGNA CARTA

Discover how this 800-year-old document made Britain the country it is today

It's a myth that Britain has never had a revolution. Over 800 years ago, on 15 June 1215, King John of England signed a document that was not only a revolution on parchment, but the foundation for every uprising against the crown that followed and the cornerstone of democracy in the English-speaking world.

This document is Magna Carta. Meaning 'the great charter' in Latin, Magna Carta was the first time the king's power – which many believed came straight from God – had been restricted. Angered by the taxes levied by their unpopular king in order to fight an expensive and disastrous war against France, Magna Carta was mainly concerned with protecting the wealth and power of England's nobility, but the 3,600-word contract contained three important clauses that over the centuries that followed would profoundly alter English society: It guaranteed a fair trial for everyone, removed the king's ability to issue taxes at will and made it clear that if the monarch were to break the conditions of Magna Carta, he could be overthrown.

True to their word, when King John sneakily petitioned the Pope to overrule Magna Carta mere months after it had been signed, saying it conflicted with an earlier decree from the head of the church, the Barons went to war to protect their rights. This example would be followed time and time again to justify citizens standing up for their rights against the crown, most famously in the English Civil War and the American Revolution.

Five charter facts

1 Latin literature

The whole document is written in continuous Medieval Latin, although later editions divided the points into 63 clauses.

2 A single author

The whole document was written by just one scribe who abbreviated some words to save space on the page.

3 Still on the books

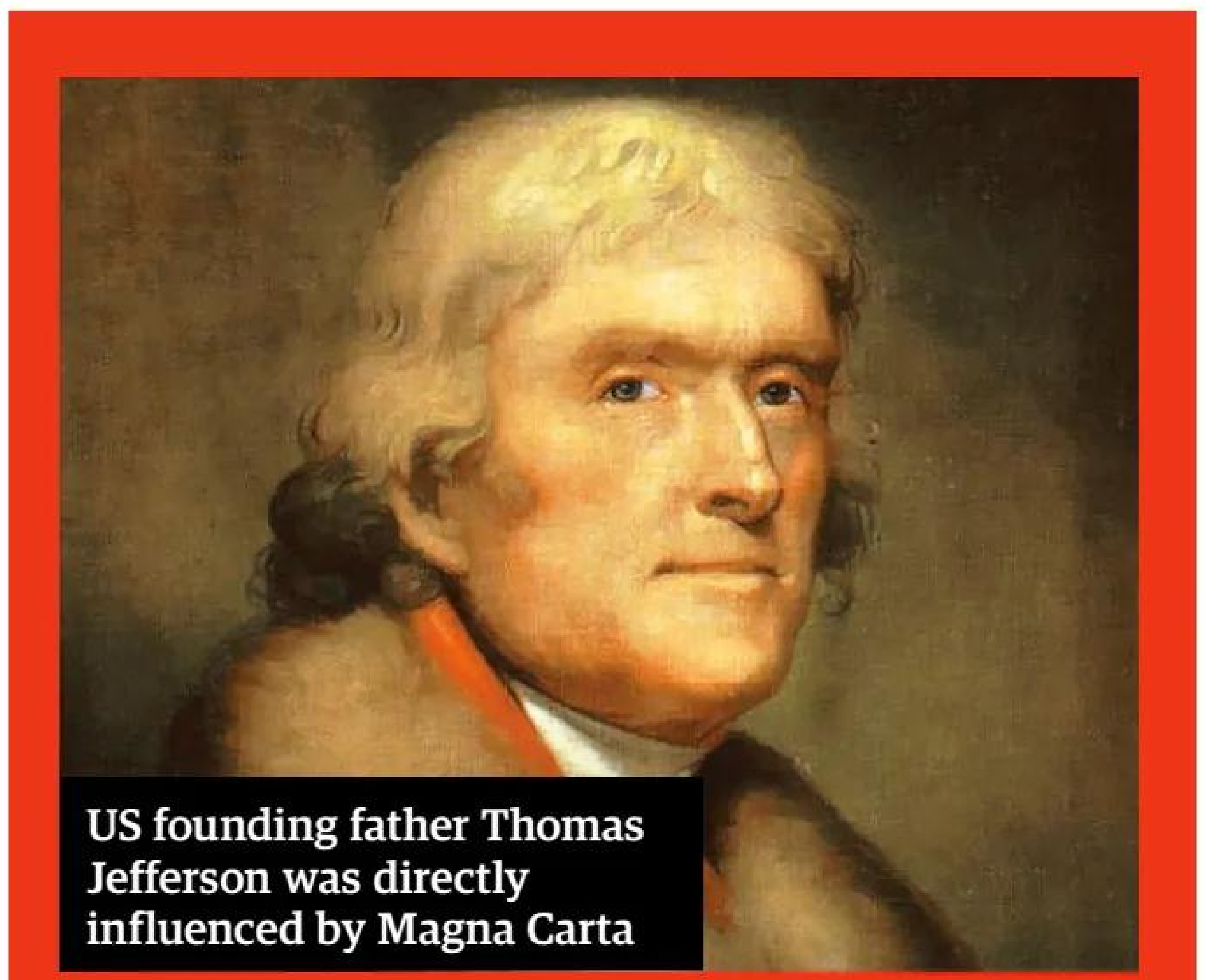
Of the 63 clauses, three of them are still part of English law – defending the rights of the church, the rights of London and other towns, and the right to a fair trial.

4 Natural ink

Magna Carta is written in iron gall ink, made from the 'galls' of a tree (growths caused by fungus or bacteria), iron sulphate and water.

5 Parchment perfect

Magna Carta was written on a parchment made of dried sheepskin.



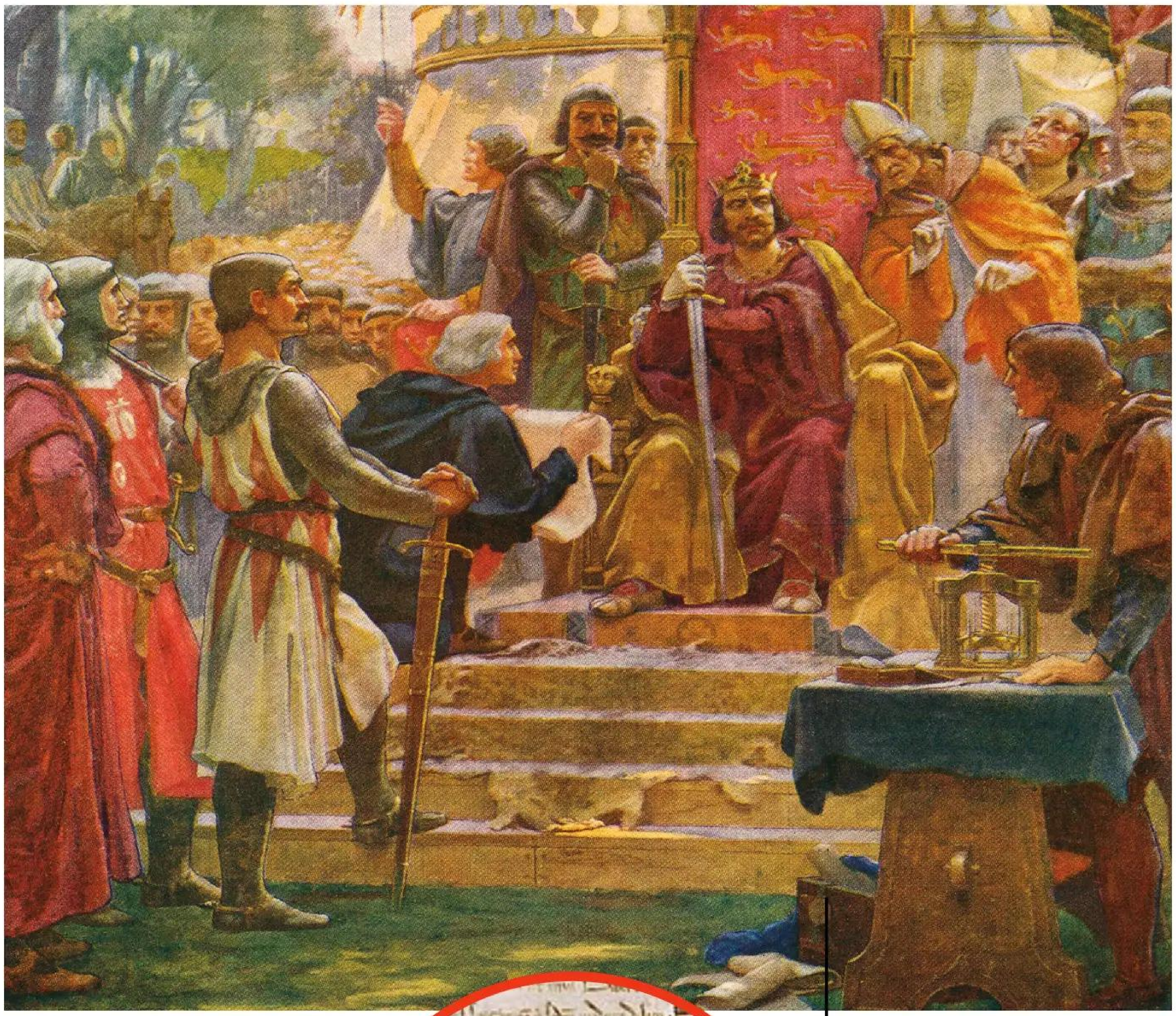
US founding father Thomas Jefferson was directly influenced by Magna Carta

MAGNA CARTA IN NORTH AMERICA

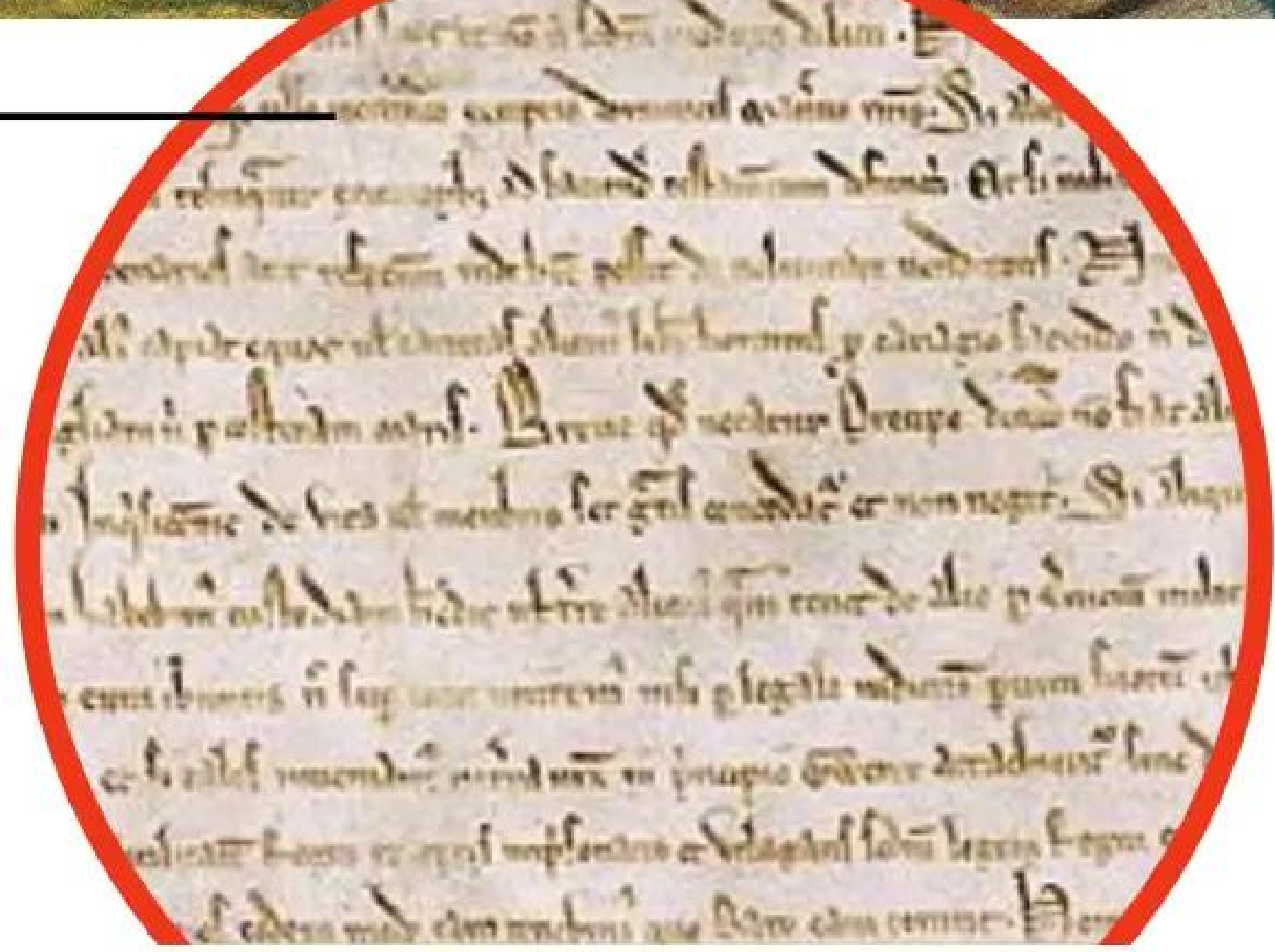
The rights of the free man against the tyranny of kings enshrined in Magna Carta didn't just give the American colonists reason to turn against George III and his unwanted taxation in the American Revolution, but it inspired them to write their own.

Both the 1776 Declaration of Independence and the 1789 Bill of Rights are influenced by the earlier document and nine of the provisions of the latter are taken directly from Magna Carta. Thomas Jefferson, one of the Founding Fathers and principal author of the Declaration, even owned a copy of English barrister Edward Coke's legal interpretation of Magna Carta, Institutes of the Lawes of England.

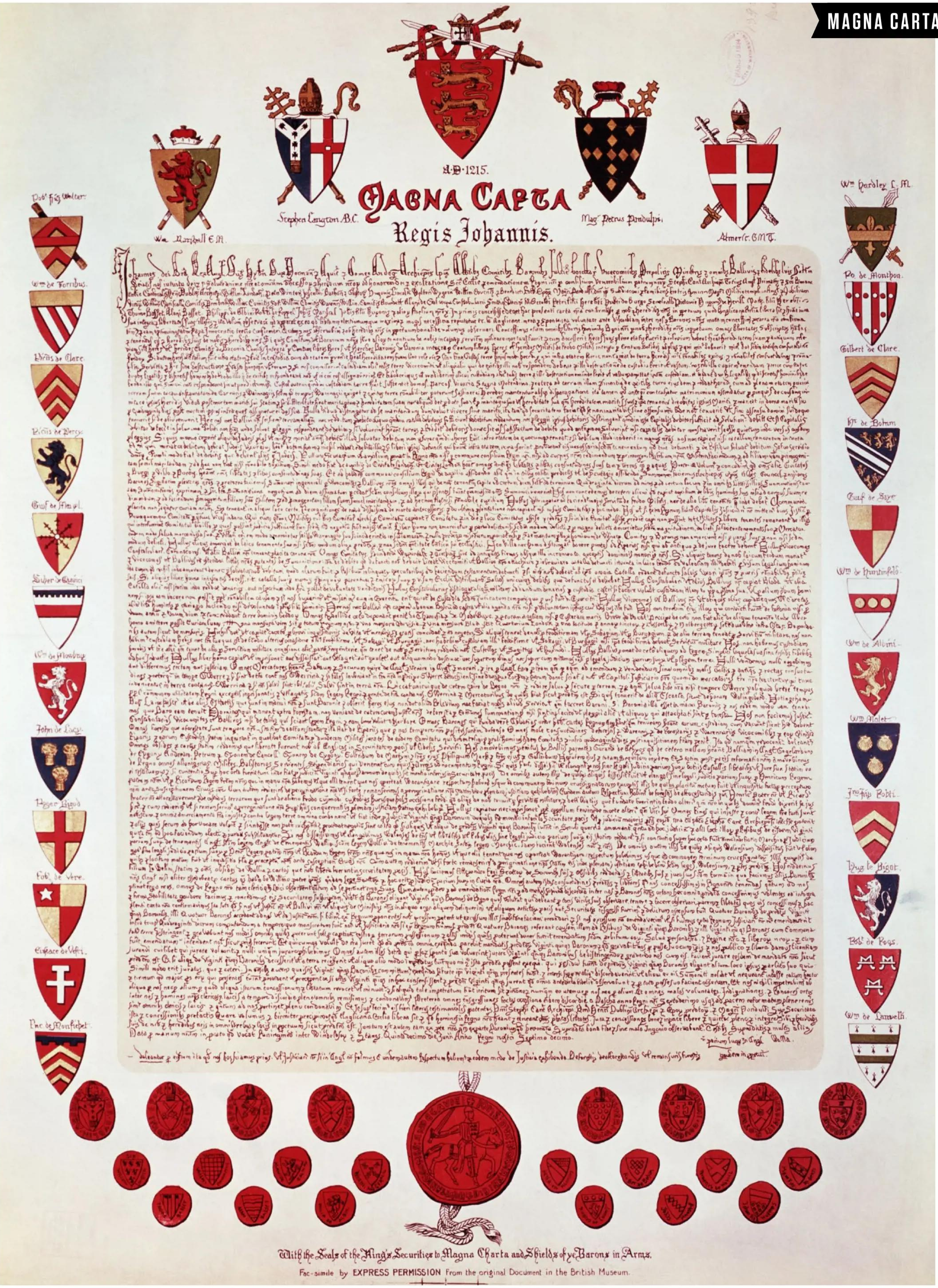
Magna Carta was revised by later monarchs and a copy from 1297 is permanently held by the US National Archives, displayed alongside the two documents it inspired as the birth certificates of the United States of America.



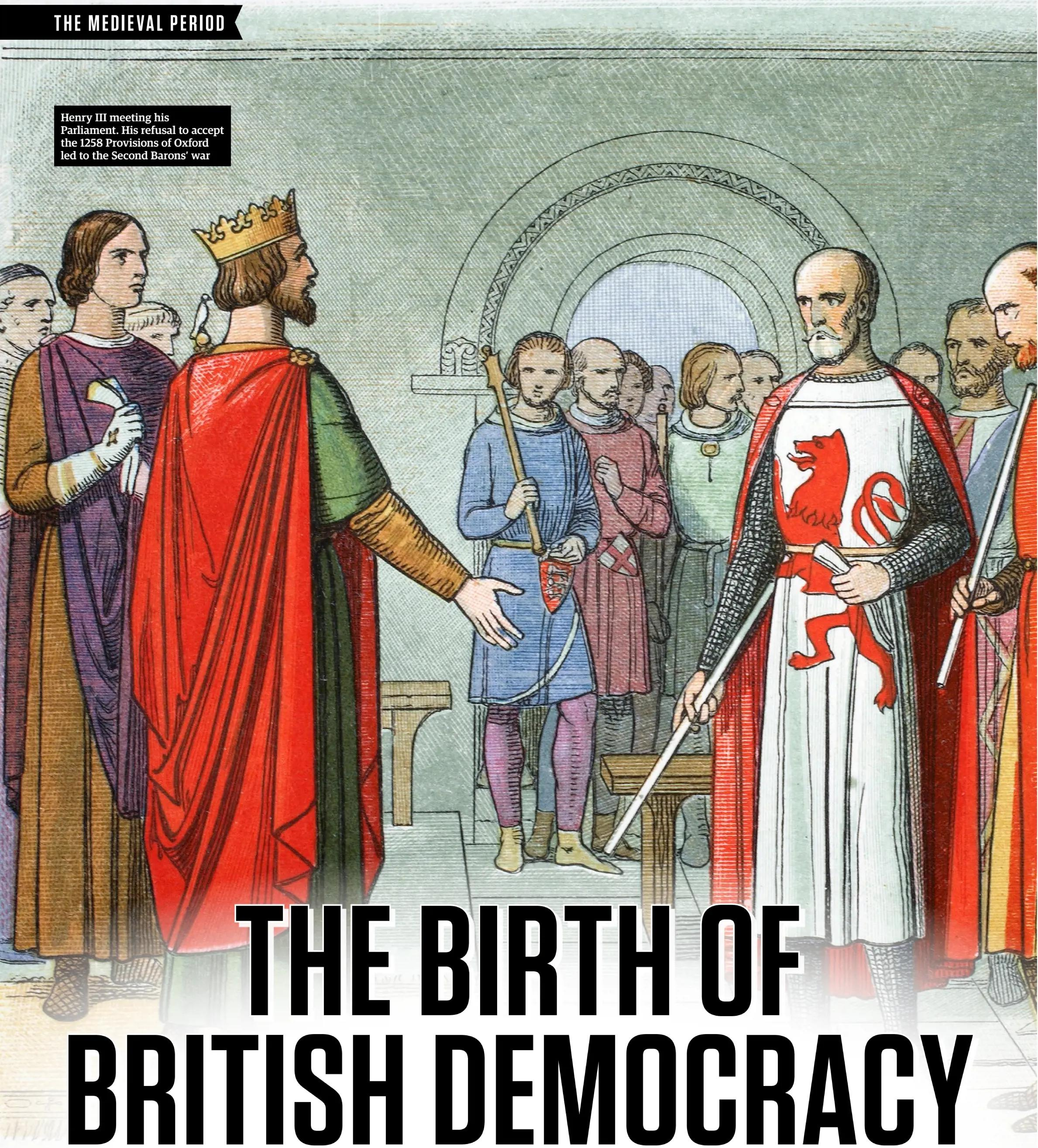
The king's seal
King John didn't 'sign' Magna Carta with his name, but with his royal seal, which was pressed into wax. Later versions of Magna Carta were signed by different monarchs.



1215 edition
This is the one of the four surviving copies of the original *Magna Carta* issued in 1215. The charter was issued again in 1216, 1217, 1225 and 1297.


A.D. 1215.
Magna Carta
Regis Johannis.
Wm Marshall E.M.
Stephen Langton A.C.
Mag' Petrus Pandulph
Aymeric C.M.T.
Rob' Fitz Walter
Wm de Fortibus
Ricus de Clare
Ricus de Percy
Galf de Mandevil
Saher de Quinci
Wm de Mowbray
John de Lacy
Roger Bigod
Rob' de Vere
Eustace de Vesci
Ric de Montfichet
Wm Hardley L.M.
Ro de Monthon
Gilbert de Clare
Hy de Bohun
Galf de Saye
Wm de Huntingfeld
Wm de Albini
Wm Malet
Jno Fitz Robt
Hug le Bigot
Rob' de Ros
Wm de Lanvelli
With the Seals of the King's Securities to Magna Charta and Shields of ye Barons in Arms.
Fac-simile by EXPRESS PERMISSION From the original Document in the British Museum.

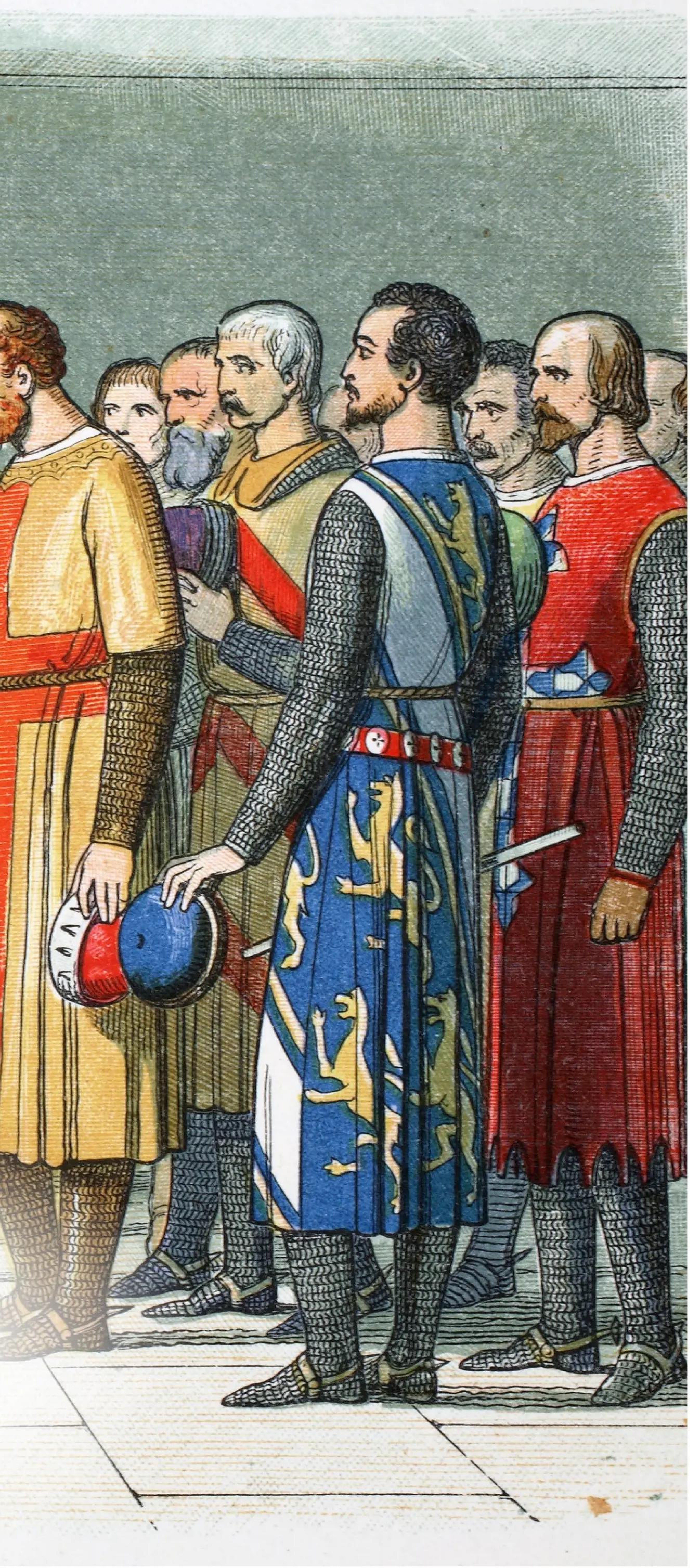
Alamy, Getty Images, Wikimedia Commons



Henry III meeting his Parliament. His refusal to accept the 1258 Provisions of Oxford led to the Second Barons' war

THE BIRTH OF BRITISH DEMOCRACY

SIMON DE MONTFORT'S 1265 PARLIAMENT



Getty Images

For the first time, representatives of the common man gave their opinions next to barons and bishops

Written by Callum McKelvie

On 14 May 1264, Simon de Montfort did the unthinkable – he captured the King of England. That same year, he called a groundbreaking Parliament that would prove instrumental in defining British democracy and ultimately lead to the House of Commons as we know it today.

De Montfort was a French nobleman who, between 1220 and 1230, came to England to lay claim to the Earlship of Leicester. He soon became an influential figure and in 1238, married Eleanor of England, the sister of King Henry III. But this was a difficult time. The creation of Magna Carta in 1215 had sought to establish the limitations of the king's power, but Henry repeatedly disregarded its instructions. Throughout England discontent began to spread...

In 1258, a coalition of barons introduced reforms, which attempted to force limits upon Henry, but again he refused to listen. By 1264, rebellion seemed inevitable and the barons, led by de Montfort, went to war against the King.

De Montfort achieved a substantial victory when he managed to capture Henry during the Battle of Lewes. For almost a year, he acted as Britain's de-facto ruler, continuing his anti-Semitic attacks that had begun during the war. Crucially, he also called two Parliaments. He summoned the first in June 1264, with the intention of establishing a temporary constitution, essentially another more rigorous attempt at restricting the King's power.

However, it was his second Parliament, first summoned on 14 December, which was the most influential. According to Dr Sophie Ambler, writing for The Magna Carta Project, the Parliament was called to "discuss the release from captivity of the lord Edward and his cousin, Henry of Almain". However she also states that, "the broader remit for discussion was the maintenance of peace and the reform of central and local government".

Beginning on 30 January 1265 and lasting until March, de Montfort had in attendance 120 bishops and two knights from every county. However, what was unique about de Montfort's Parliament was that he also invited 'burgesses': citizens who came representing a particular area – the first parliament to do so.

Those attending were able to voice their opinions on a number of issues relating to the running of the country. When Henry III and other kings had previously called Parliaments, it was only ever to achieve consent for further taxation. The desire for a greater say in matters of state had been a bone of contention for some time.

On 4 August 1265, Simon de Montfort confronted the escaped Prince Edward at the Battle of Evesham, where he met his end. According to a contemporary account of the battle, the Earl's head "was severed from his body, and his testicles cut off and hung on either side of his nose".

But the legacies of de Montfort's second Parliament live on. When Edward became king, he ensured that Parliament met more frequently and, from 1295, that the summoning of burgesses was expected. From 1332, knights and burgesses began to sit together in a chamber that became known as the 'House of Commons'.

THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER

Known as the 'Mother of Parliaments', Westminster's iconic architecture is recognised throughout the world

Written by Tim Hopkinson-Ball

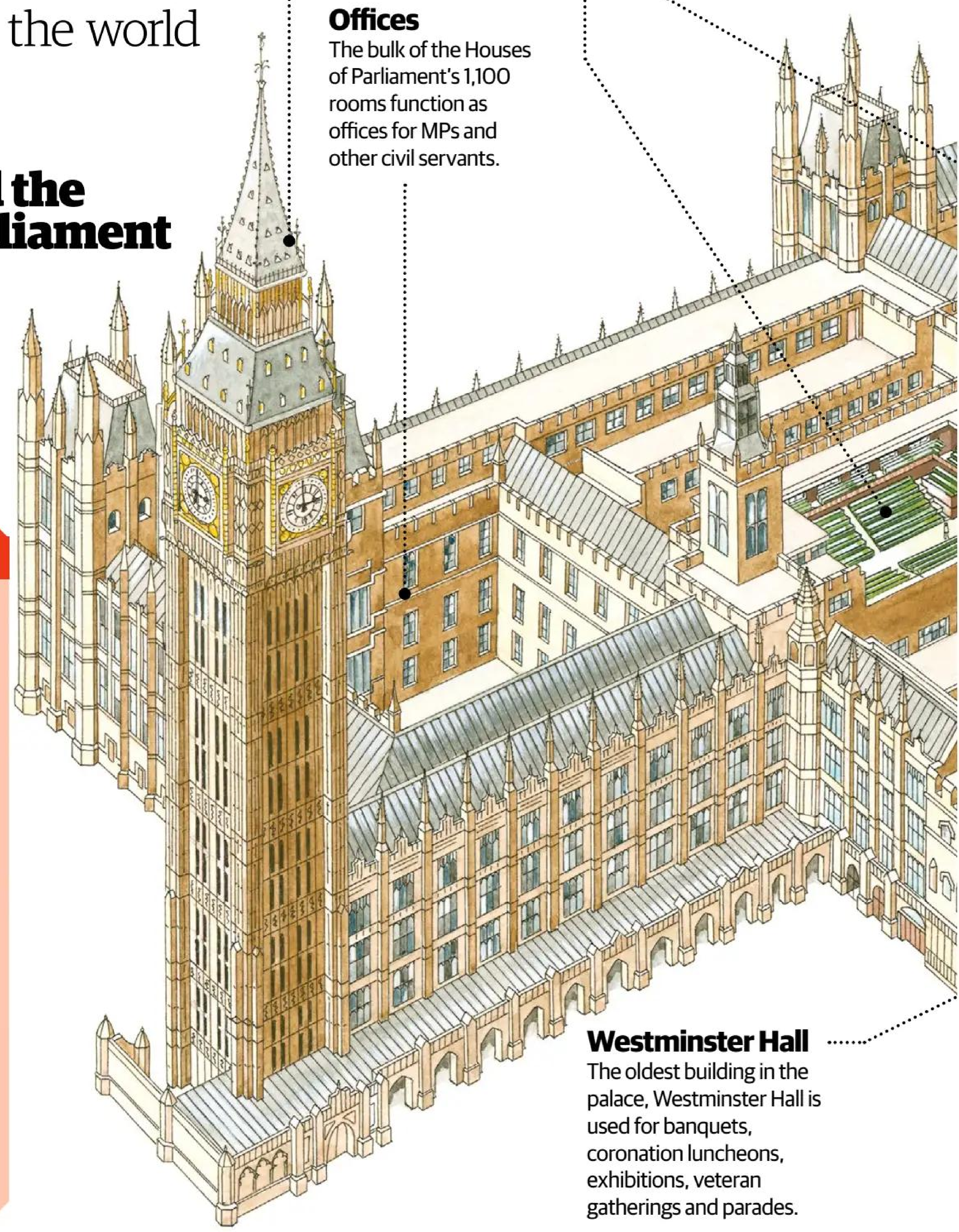
The Palace of Westminster was established by King Canute in the early-11th century and much expanded by Edward the Confessor after his coronation in 1042. After the Norman Conquest, William I adopted Westminster to help validate his new regime and his son, William Rufus, built the great hall (Westminster Hall). At the time of its construction, this hall was the largest of its kind in Europe and remains so to this day.

Under King Henry III Westminster became increasingly important as a central hub of royal power. He had a set of splendid apartments built which included the Painted Chamber, an enormous rectangular room which housed the monarch's state bed. The bedroom's decoration was so detailed that it took over 60 years to paint. Although much degraded and damaged over the centuries, the Painted Chamber survived for more than 600 years until it was demolished in the catastrophic fire of 1834.

The medieval palace's other focal point was the magnificent St Stephen's Chapel. First mentioned in 1184, it was rebuilt by Edward I in the mid-13th century to rival the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, before being remodelled by Edward III. It was finally completed in 1363. Thought to be the first building constructed in the English Perpendicular Gothic style, the chapel was served by the canons

A tour around the Houses of Parliament

The heart of British politics is a maze-like building put together over hundreds of years…



Commons Chamber
Rebuilt after WWII, the Commons Chamber is famous for its green upholstery – a custom dating back 300 years.

Central Lobby
Located beneath the Central Tower, this lobby is at the heart of the palace, linking the two houses' chambers and Westminster Hall.

Elizabeth Tower
Popularly known as 'Big Ben', the Elizabeth Tower is iconic of Westminster and known across the globe.

Offices
The bulk of the Houses of Parliament's 1,100 rooms function as offices for MPs and other civil servants.

Westminster Hall
The oldest building in the palace, Westminster Hall is used for banquets, coronation luncheons, exhibitions, veteran gatherings and parades.

The statistics

The Palace of Westminster

Architect: Sir Charles Barry

Years of construction: 1840-1870

Type of building/purpose: Parliament building

Location: The City of Westminster, London, UK

Full height: 98.5m (323ft)

Area of site: 3.2 hectares (8 acres)

Cost of construction: £2m (in the region of £200m/$270m today)

Parliament in progress

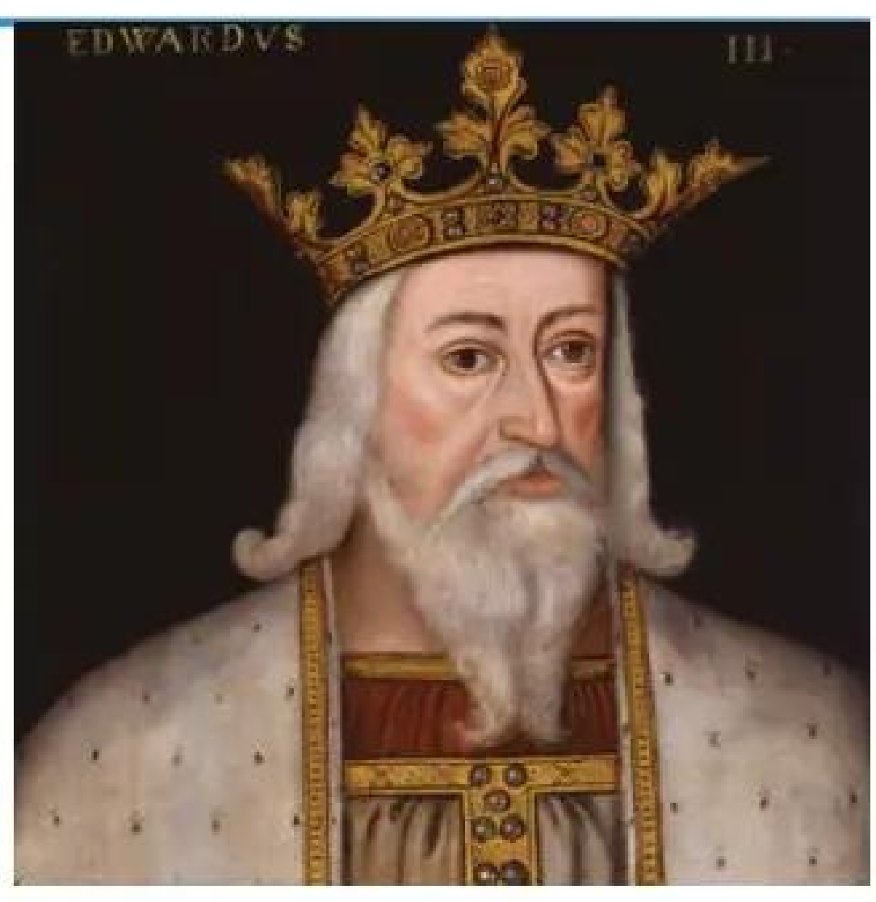
We pick just a few of the notable dates in the Palace of Westminster's long history

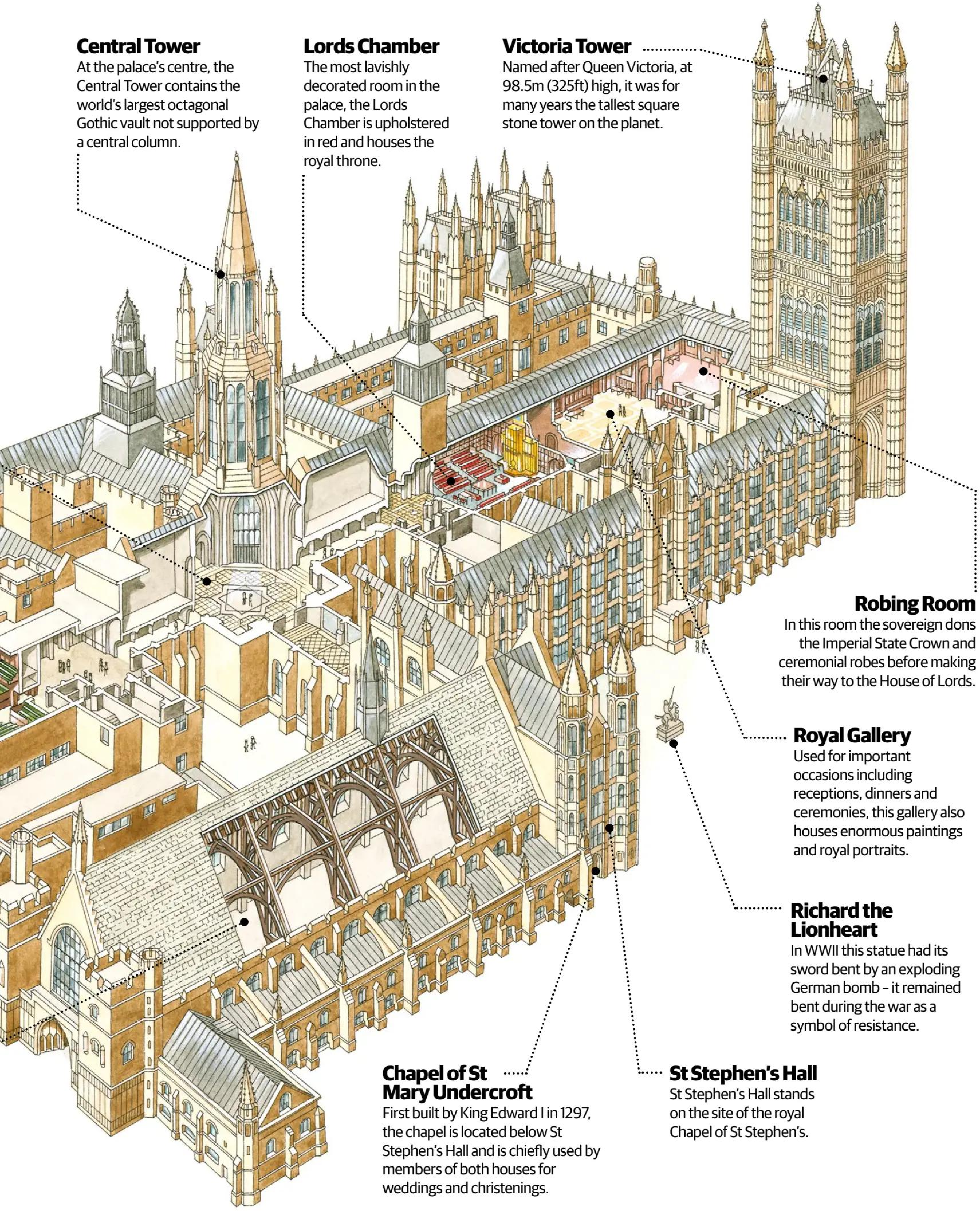
c.1016
Foundations laid
King Canute builds a royal residence on Thorney Island, a former islet (or eyot) in the River Thames.

1097-9
Westminster Hall erected
William II – the son of William the Conqueror – builds Westminster Hall over three years.

1292
Chapel remodelled
King Edward I begins rebuilding St Stephen's Chapel located next to Westminster Hall.

1367
Time for a tower
Edward III (right) constructs Westminster's first clock tower in New Palace Yard.





Central Tower
At the palace's centre, the Central Tower contains the world's largest octagonal Gothic vault not supported by a central column.

Lords Chamber
The most lavishly decorated room in the palace, the Lords Chamber is upholstered in red and houses the royal throne.

Victoria Tower
Named after Queen Victoria, at 98.5m (325ft) high, it was for many years the tallest square stone tower on the planet.

Robing Room
In this room the sovereign dons the Imperial State Crown and ceremonial robes before making their way to the House of Lords.

Royal Gallery
Used for important occasions including receptions, dinners and ceremonies, this gallery also houses enormous paintings and royal portraits.

Richard the Lionheart
In WWII this statue had its sword bent by an exploding German bomb – it remained bent during the war as a symbol of resistance.

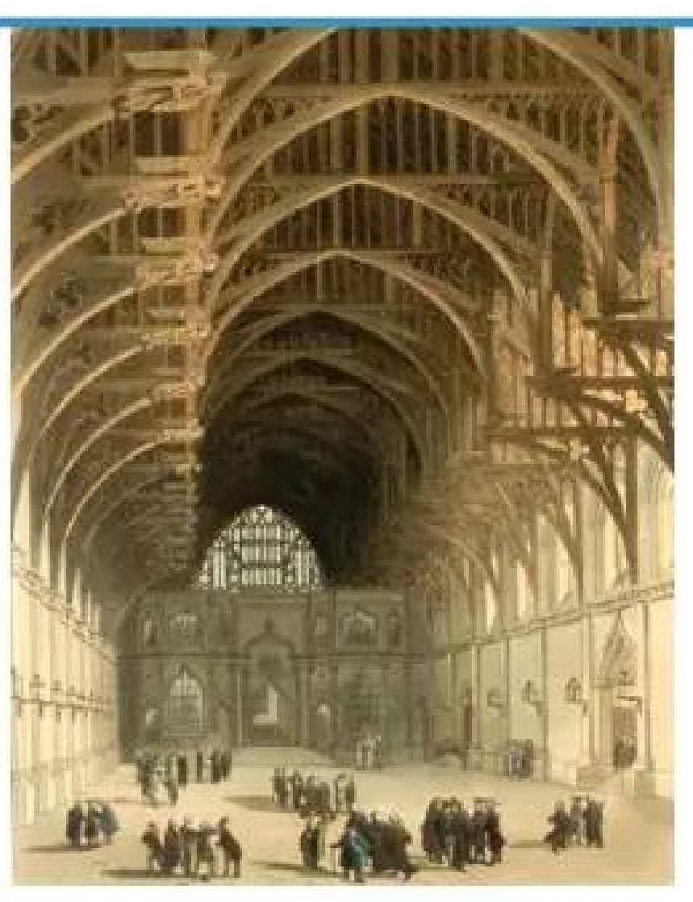
Chapel of St Mary Undercroft
First built by King Edward I in 1297, the chapel is located below St Stephen's Hall and is chiefly used by members of both houses for weddings and christenings.

St Stephen's Hall
St Stephen's Hall stands on the site of the royal Chapel of St Stephen's.

BIG BEN IN FOCUS

Although the name 'Big Ben' is often used to describe Westminster's clock tower, it is actually called the Elizabeth Tower. While the bell is officially called the Great Bell of Westminster, it's generally referred to as Big Ben – a nickname of uncertain origin now known all over the world. The Elizabeth Tower was designed by the architect Augustus Pugin and completed in 1859; it contains 11 floors and there are 334 steps to the belfry. The belfry houses the Great Clock of Westminster, built by Edward John Dent and his sons. Striking the hour to within a second of the time, the Great Clock has remained reliable since it entered service in 1859. The time is shown on four dials, each seven metres (23 feet) in diameter, which are made of opalescent milk glass and can be lit from behind at night. The hour hand is 2.7 metres (8.9 feet) long, while the minute hand measures 4.2 metres (13.7 feet). The Great Clock started ticking on 31 May 1859, with the Great Bell's strikes heard for the first time on 11 July the same year. The Great Bell weighs 13.7 tons, is 2.2 metres (7.2 feet) in height and produces the note 'E' when tolled. Big Ben is fixed and struck by hammers from outside rather than swinging and being struck from inside by clappers. There are four other bells in the belfry and, when rung together, they produce the 'Westminster chimes'.

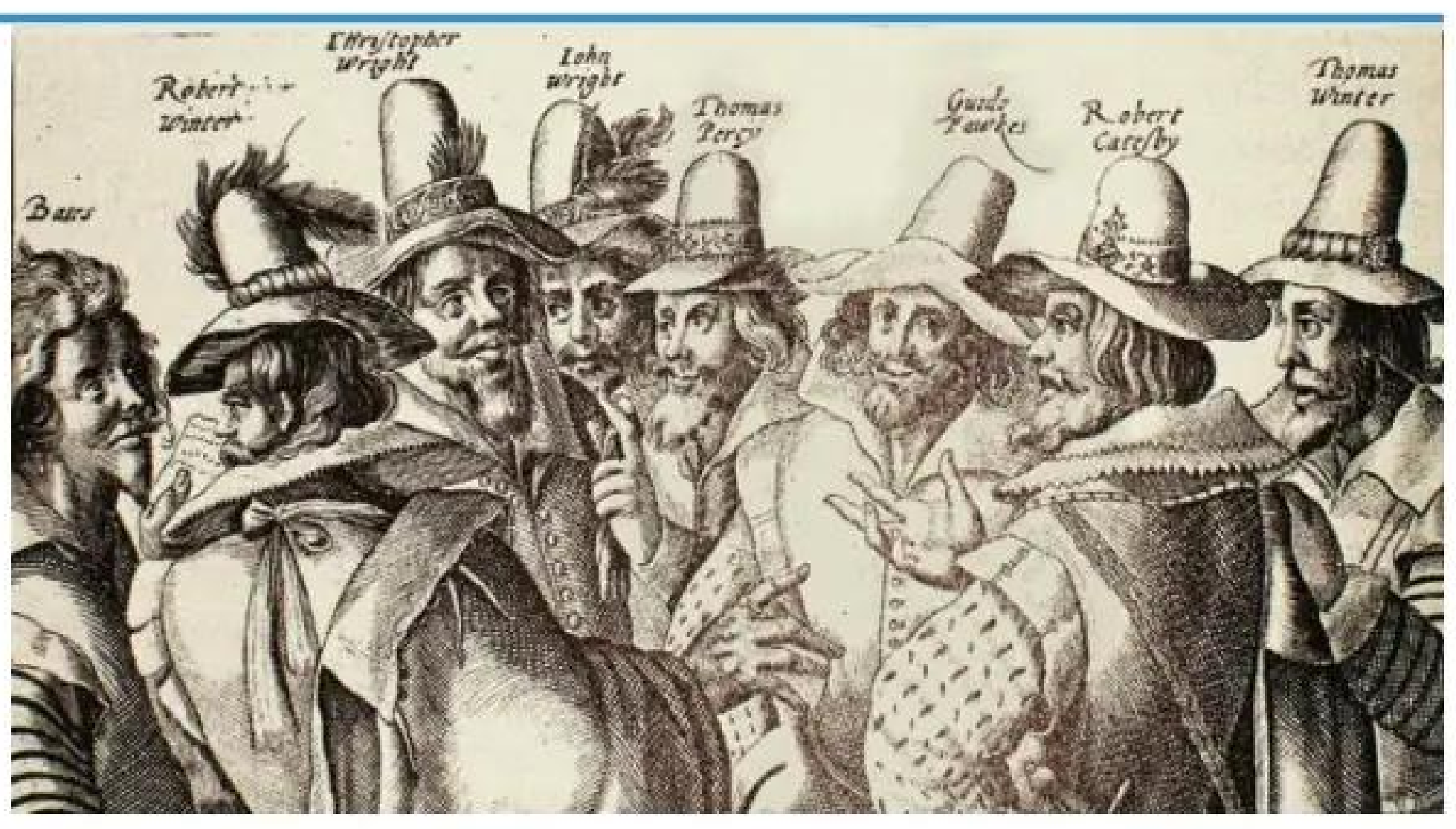
1394-99
Westminster Hall rebuilt
Richard II rebuilds Westminster Hall in its present form.



1512
Parliament arrives
The palace becomes the permanent residence for the English parliament.

1547
Edward VI's gift
Henry VIII's son Edward VI gives St Stephen's Chapel to the Commons after the dissolution of the college.

1605
Gunpowder Plot
Guy Fawkes and fellow conspirators try to blow up the House of Lords, but Fawkes is caught red-handed.



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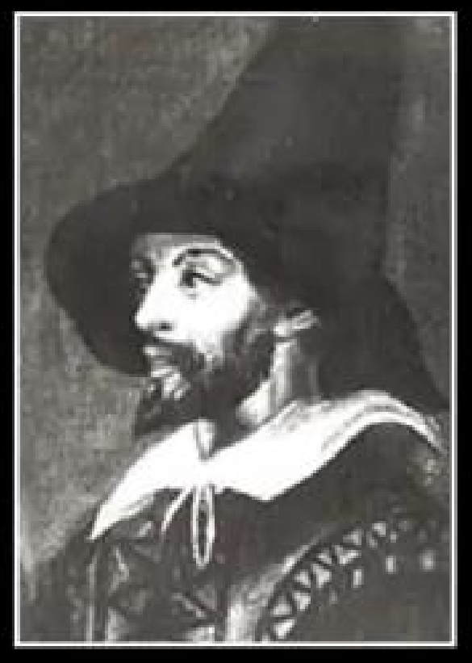
of St Stephen's College. Westminster remained the English monarchy's principal royal residence throughout the medieval period until 1512, when Henry VIII abandoned it in favour of the nearby Palace of Whitehall.

In the Middle Ages parliament frequently met in Westminster Abbey's octagonal Chapter House - close to the Palace of Westminster - but in 1547 Edward VI closed St Stephen's College and gave the Commons the chapel as their permanent home. When the MPs moved in, they sat in the choir stalls and made speeches to each other across the chapel's central aisle. This arrangement may have encouraged the development of the two-party system of government versus opposition (see boxout) with which we are familiar today.

During the 17th and 18th centuries the medieval palace was gradually lost as various buildings were converted for new uses and its interiors redecorated. 'Improvements' were undertaken by architects such as Sir Christopher Wren, James Wyatt and Sir John Soane, which resulted in the palace gradually being transformed into a complex tangle of buildings. Then, on the night of 16 October 1834, a devastating fire broke out which destroyed the whole palace apart from Westminster Hall and a few minor buildings.

After the fire a competition was held for a new design and Sir Charles Barry's was chosen from a total of 97 entries. Barry's vision for Westminster in a Perpendicular Gothic style was in harmony with the surviving buildings and was also carefully designed to serve the day-to-day needs and workings of parliament. All in all the construction of the new palace took some 30 years. Its sumptuous interior decoration was the work of Augustus Welby Pugin, a gifted 23-year-old Roman Catholic architect and draughtsman. Westminster's new design was so successful that it not only influenced the designs of town halls, law courts and schools throughout the British Empire, but it also came to be recognised globally as an architectural masterpiece.

Today, after all these centuries, the Palace of Westminster remains at the heart of UK government. It contains over 1,100 rooms, 100 staircases and some 4.8 kilometres (three miles) of passageways which are spread over four floors. Despite being over 170 years old, the palace still functions smoothly, acting as a backdrop for both the cut and thrust of modern politics and royal ceremonial life, such as the state opening of parliament. Still officially a royal residence after almost a thousand years, the Palace of Westminster was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1987, as a seminal example of neo-Gothic architecture.



Of Gunpowder and Treason

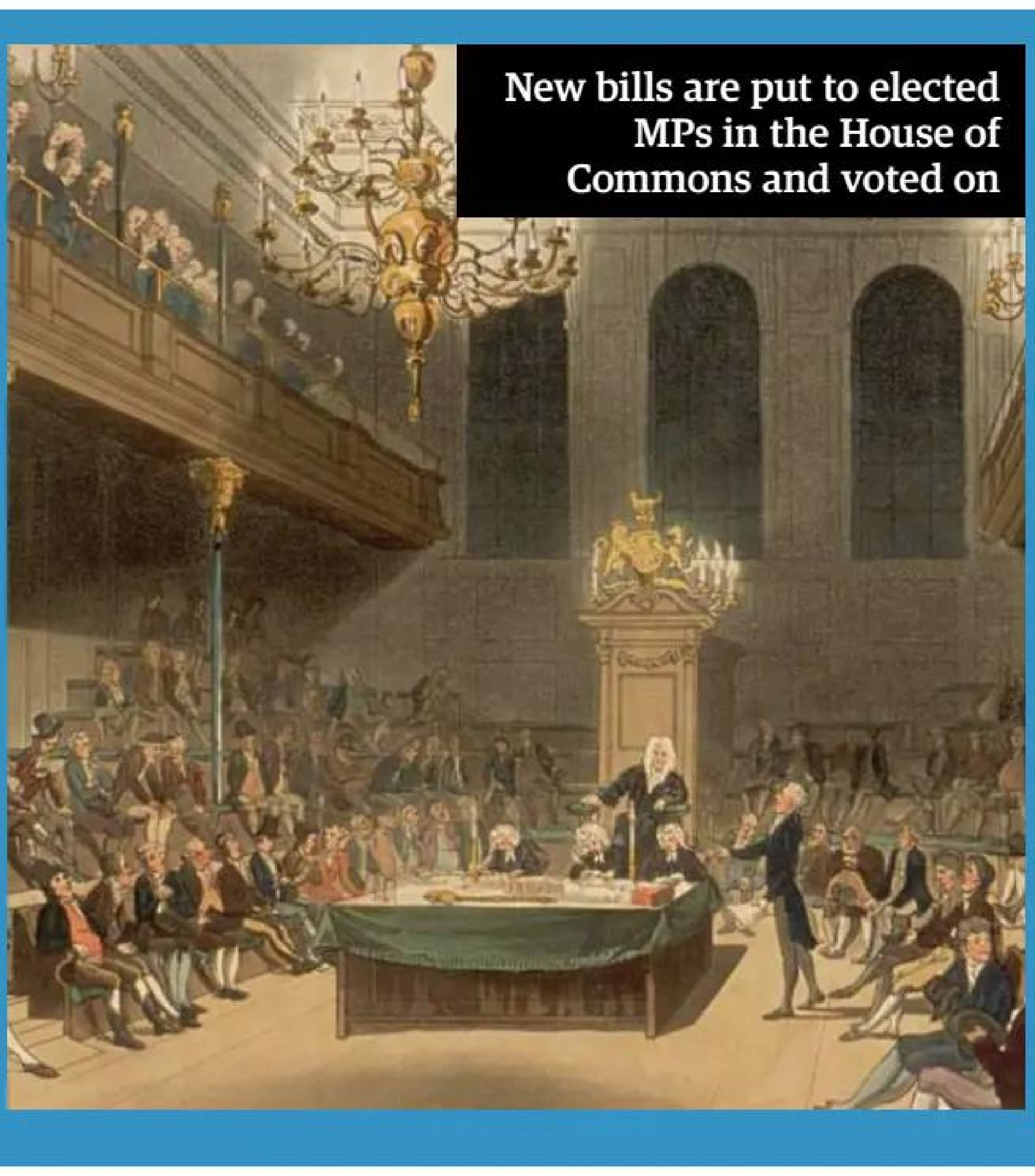
The Gunpowder Plot of 1605 was a failed assassination attempt against King James I of England (or James VI of Scotland) by a group of English Catholics led by Robert Catesby. The plan was to blow up the House of Lords during the state opening of parliament on 5 November 1605, as the prelude to a popular revolt in the Midlands during which James's nine-year-old daughter, Princess Elizabeth, was to be installed as the Catholic head of state. The conspirators thus hoped that England would once more become a Roman Catholic country.

One of the conspirators - Guy Fawkes, who had ten years' military experience abroad - was put in charge of the explosives. These were then secretly smuggled into the palace. However the plot was revealed to the authorities and, during a search of the House of Lords at about midnight on 4 November 1605, Fawkes and 36 barrels of gunpowder were discovered. This was enough explosive to reduce the House of Lords to rubble and kill all within it. Most of the conspirators fled from London but were soon captured. At their trial on 27 January 1606, the conspirators were convicted and sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered. The thwarting of the Gunpowder Plot was widely celebrated and it's known to this day as Bonfire Night.

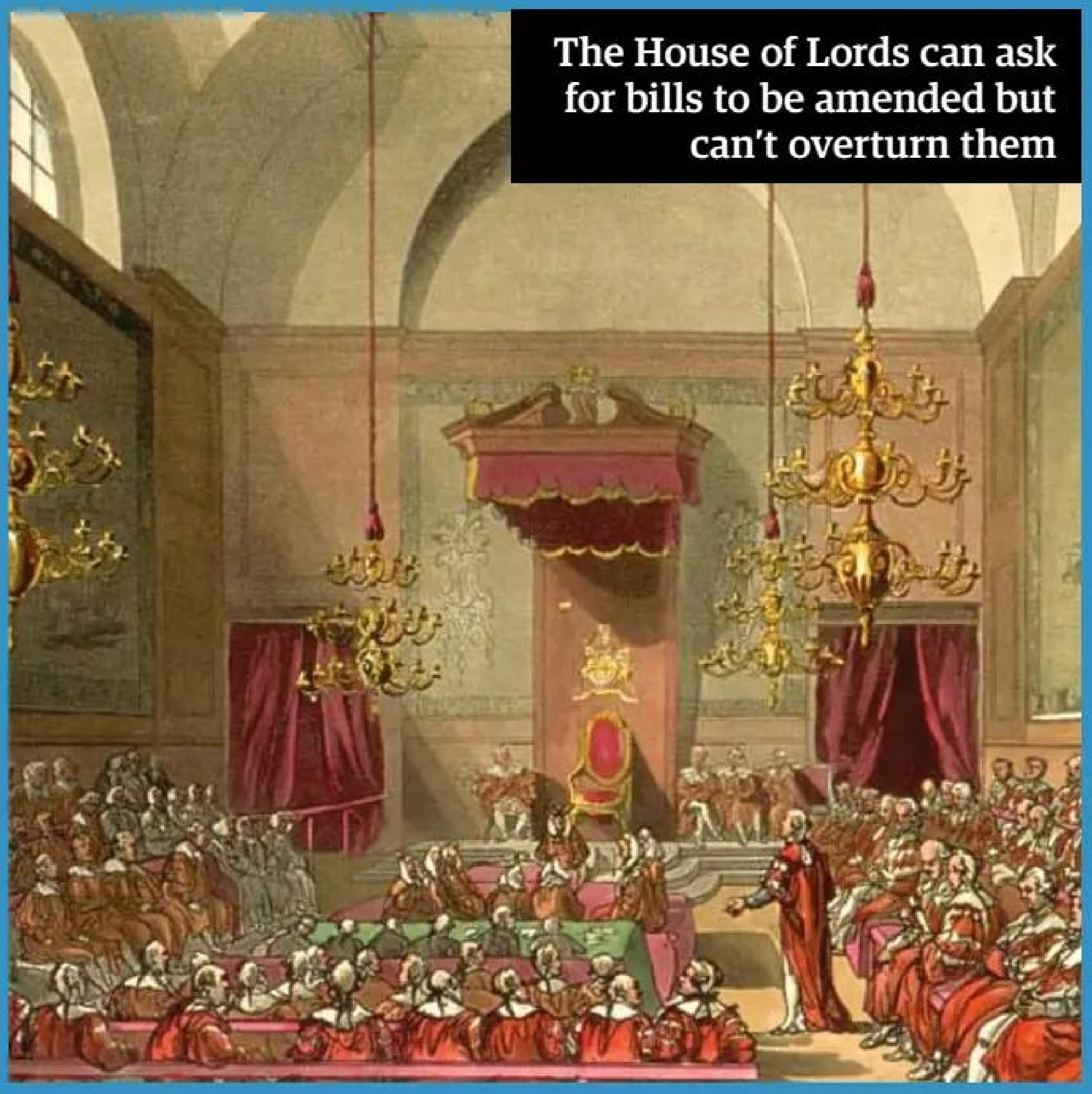
THE TWO-HOUSE SYSTEM

The Westminster parliament comprises two 'houses': the House of Commons (the lower house), consisting of 650 members (MPs) elected by their constituencies, and the House of Lords (the upper house), consisting of life peers, hereditary peers and Lords Spiritual (bishops of the Church of England). At present the House of Lords has 775 members.

The purpose of parliament is to govern the country in the monarch's name and this falls to the largest party in the Commons (or a coalition of parties as at present). Legislation once passed by the Commons goes on to the Lords. The upper house can scrutinise and delay legislation, but since the Parliament Act of 1911, the Lords cannot reject it. The government is primarily responsible to the House of Commons and the prime minister stays in office only so long as he or she retains its support.



New bills are put to elected MPs in the House of Commons and voted on

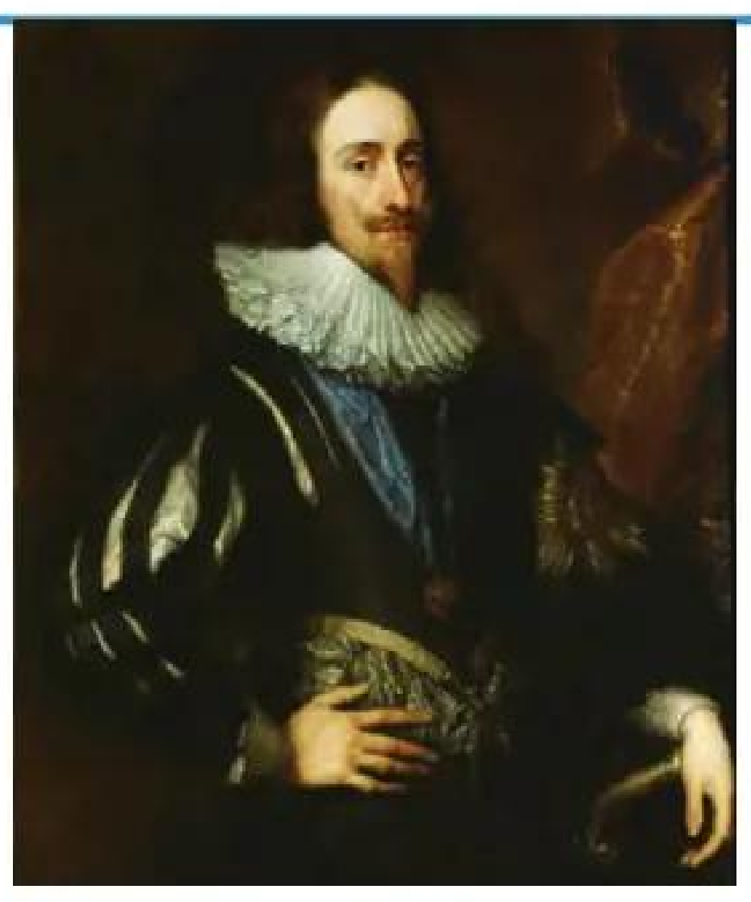


The House of Lords can ask for bills to be amended but can't overturn them

1649

Fate of a king

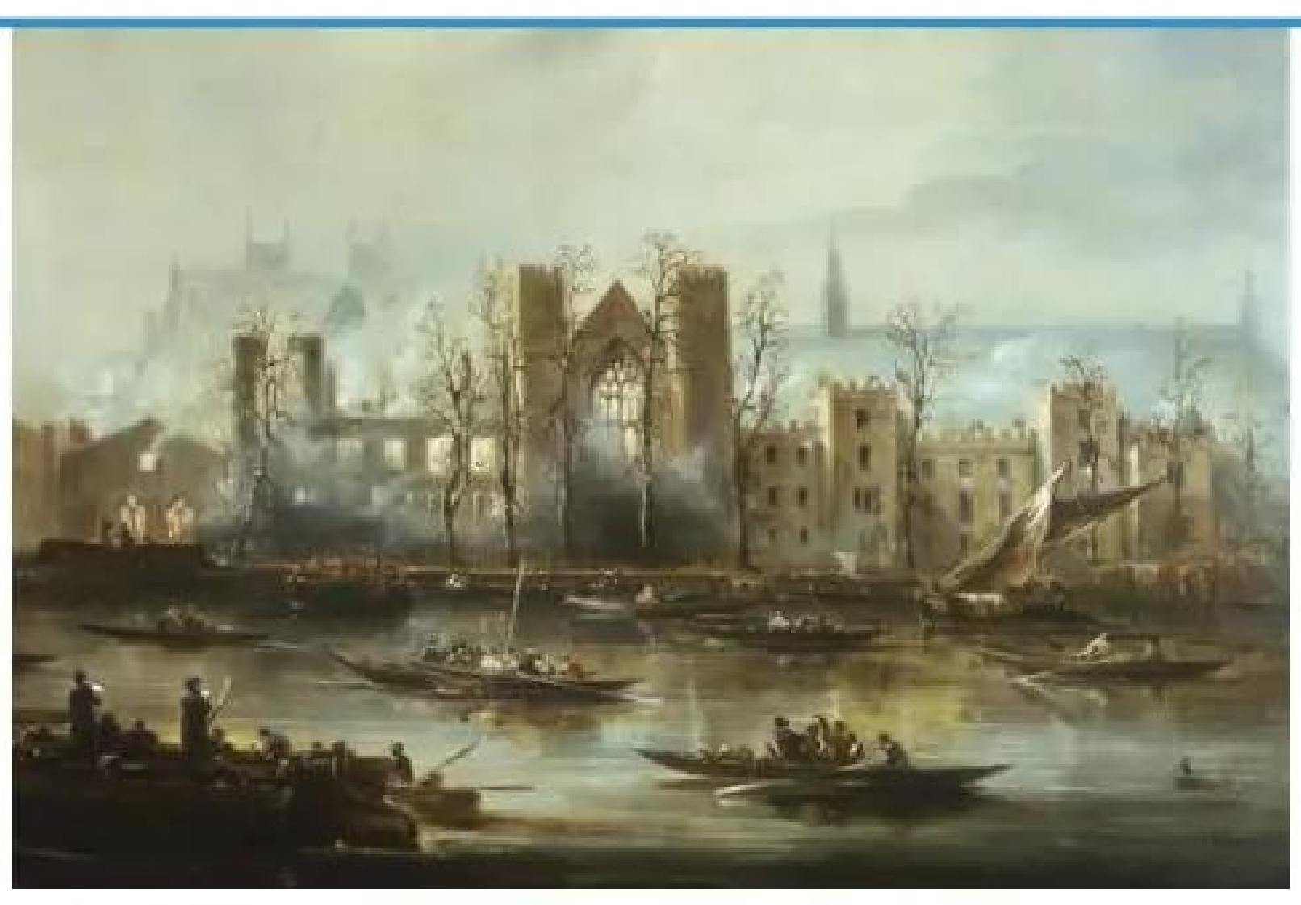
Charles I (right) is condemned to death in Westminster Hall after his defeat in the English Civil War.



1834

The Great Fire

The Palace of Westminster, dating from medieval times, is destroyed by fire.



1835

Competition

Sir Charles Barry wins a competition to rebuild the palace in a Gothic-revival style.

1840

The first stone

The first stone of the new palace is laid by Charles Barry's wife in the north-east corner of the building.

SURVIVING THE BLITZ

During the course of World War II, the Palace of Westminster was hit by German bombs on 14 separate occasions. The worst raid took place on the night of 10 May 1941, when the palace took at least 12 hits and three people were killed. An incendiary bomb struck the chamber of the House of Commons and set it on fire, while another set the roof of Westminster Hall alight. The firefighters could not save both and so the decision was taken to rescue the historically important hall. In this they were successful, but the abandoned Commons Chamber was completely gutted, as was the Members' Lobby. A bomb also struck the Lords Chamber, but luckily it went through the floor without exploding. The Elizabeth Tower (which houses Big Ben) was hit by a small bomb or shell just below the roof line and it suffered much damage as a result. All the glass in the south dial was blown out, but the hands and bells were not affected – amazingly, despite the explosion, the clock continued to keep time accurately. The Commons Chamber was rebuilt after the war by the architect Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. The reconstruction was in a simplified version of the old chamber's style, and it is Scott's chamber – not Augustus Pugin's – that we know today.

1859

Big Ben arrives

The bell that has famously come to be known as Big Ben is installed in the Elizabeth Tower.

1870

Westminster complete

The rebuilding of the new Palace of Westminster is completed.

1941

The Blitz

The Commons Chamber is destroyed on 10/11 May – the last day of the London Blitz.

2000

Portcullis House

A new parliamentary building to house Members of Parliament's offices is completed. It was officially opened by the Queen in 2001.

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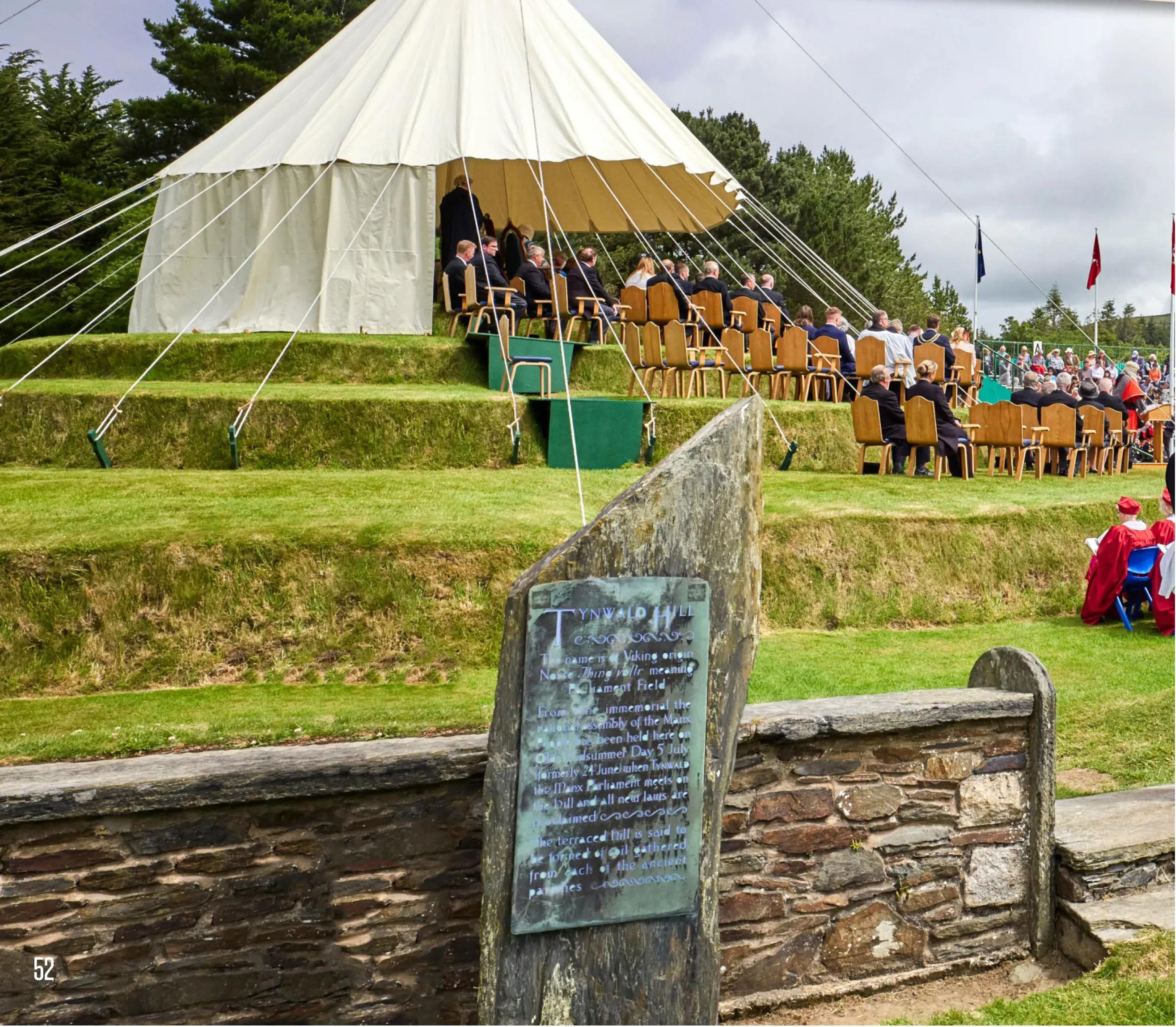
TYNWALD

THE THING IN THE FIELD


TYNWALD HILL
The name is of Viking origin
Norse Thing vollr meaning
Parliament Field
From time immemorial the
national assembly of the Manx
People has been held here on
Old Midsummer Day 5 July
(formerly 24 June) when TYNWALD
the Manx Parliament meets on
the hill and all new laws are
proclaimed
The terraced hill is said to
be formed of soil gathered
from each of the ancient
parishes

The oldest continuous parliament in the world is not in Greece, but sits on an island in the middle of the Irish Sea

In 1979, the people of the Isle of Man celebrated the millennium of their parliament, the Tynwald. The Manx are unsurprisingly proud of their claim to having the oldest continuous parliament in the world. There might have been earlier parliaments but they, unlike the Tynwald, have stopped and started. According to the Manx, the Tynwald has run for over a thousand years without interruption as the institution that represents the people of the island. And that's true… sort of.

Yes, the Tynwald is extremely old, with its roots stretching back into the first millennium. Yes, it has been going for a very long time. But because it's so old, it's actually quite difficult to unearth definite evidence for its early operation.

For instance, the 1979 millennium of the Tynwald was actually a random date chosen to commemorate the fact that the Tynwald had been an assembly for ages. But there's nothing in the surviving records to say that 979 was the date of the first meeting of the Tynwald. It was more a case of islanders saying, 'let's celebrate our democracy and 1979 looks as good a date as any other to do it'.

Still, they had good reason to do so. The Viking Norse conquered the island at the end of the 8th century and it became a vital stronghold and staging post for the trading empire they established from Scandinavia, through Orkney, round to the Western Isles and then across the Irish Sea to Dublin. The Isle of Man stood at the centre of this trading and raiding empire, and the Norse soon established a 'thing' - the assembly of free men - on the island. As with other 'things', the one on Man was held at a prominent meeting place: in this case, Tynwald Hill in St John's. The artificial mound now consists of four tapered round layers, making a sort of stepped cone. Archaeologists believe the site was first used in neolithic times before the Norse Manx made it their assembly place. A 'thing' was where the free men of the area gathered to promulgate laws. The name Tynwald is derived from the Old Norse word Þingvellir, which means the field of the thing.

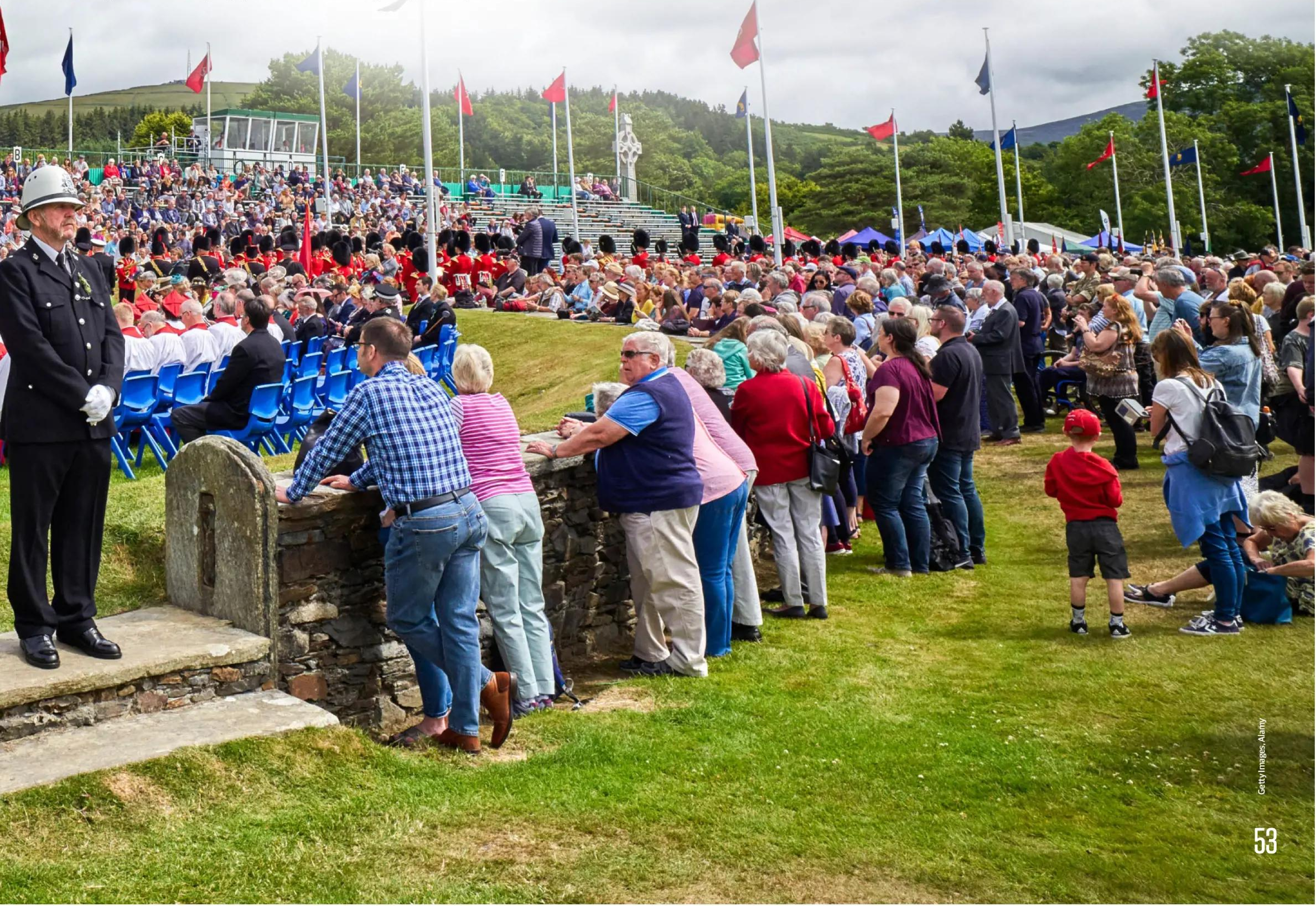
As such, the Tynwald met regularly throughout the Middle Ages, although its role back then was confined to interpreting the common law (basically, the customs by which everyone lived) when circumstances changed. It only became a legislative assembly around 1610.

While the Tynwald has now moved to Douglas, every year the legislature decamps to Tynwald Hill for Tynwald Day. It is a national holiday on Man, usually held on 5 July. The lieutenant governor presides over the meeting and all the laws enacted by the Tynwald over the previous year are proclaimed to the assembled people, first in Manx and then in English. Indeed, a law is not considered enacted until it has been publicly proclaimed. Finally, in a custom that goes right back to the assembly's roots, any petitions that members of the public may have are heard.

That is the Tynwald, the oldest continuous parliament in the world, set on an island in the middle of the Irish Sea.

MAIN At the annual Tynwald Day ceremony, the Manx Parliament meet for an open-air assembly on the Tynwald Hill artificial mound

INSET The Tynwald ceremony (pictured in 1909) is thought to date back to the 10th century



Getty Images, Alamy

DEMOCRACY IN THE EARLY MODERN PERIOD

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Explore the early modern milestones in the history of democracy

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Getty Images

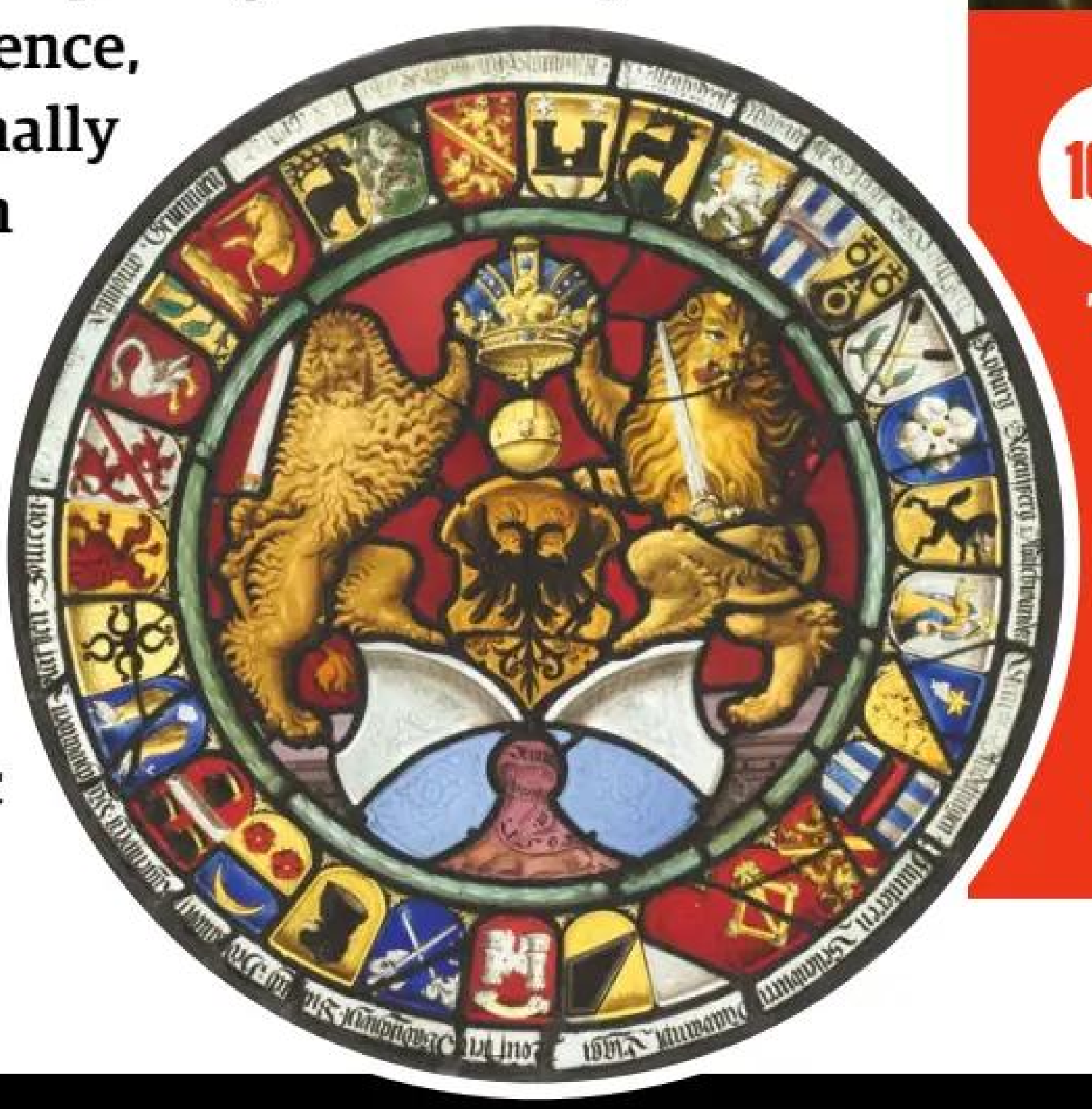
DEMOCRACY THROUGH HISTORY: EARLY MODERN MILESTONES

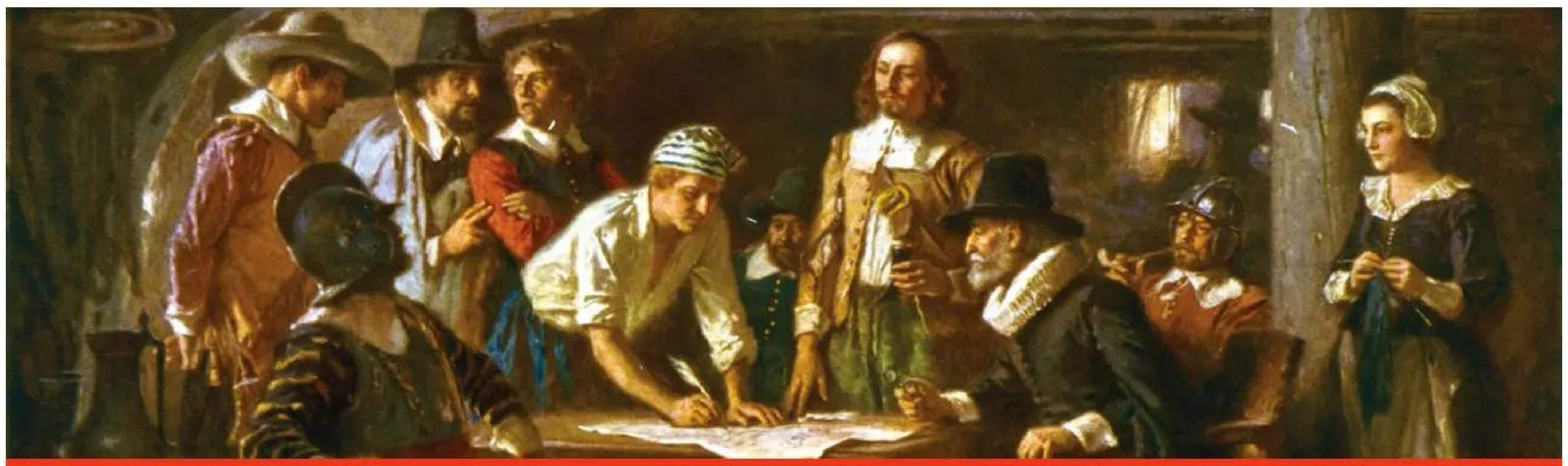
Written by Ben Gazur

1513 SWISS CONFEDERATION

SWITZERLAND

From the 13th century several Swiss cantons (independent states), made alliances with each other to form a confederacy to protect their rights within the larger Holy Roman Empire. Each canton ruled itself via either direct democracy or by representative councils and were effectively small republics. A successful war against the powerful Hapsburgs of the Empire in 1499 won Swiss independence, though this was only formally acknowledged by treaty in 1648. In 1513, a 13th and final canton was added to the confederation, forming the nucleus of modern-day Switzerland and creating one of the most powerful democratic states in Europe.





1620 MAYFLOWER COMPACT

NEW ENGLAND

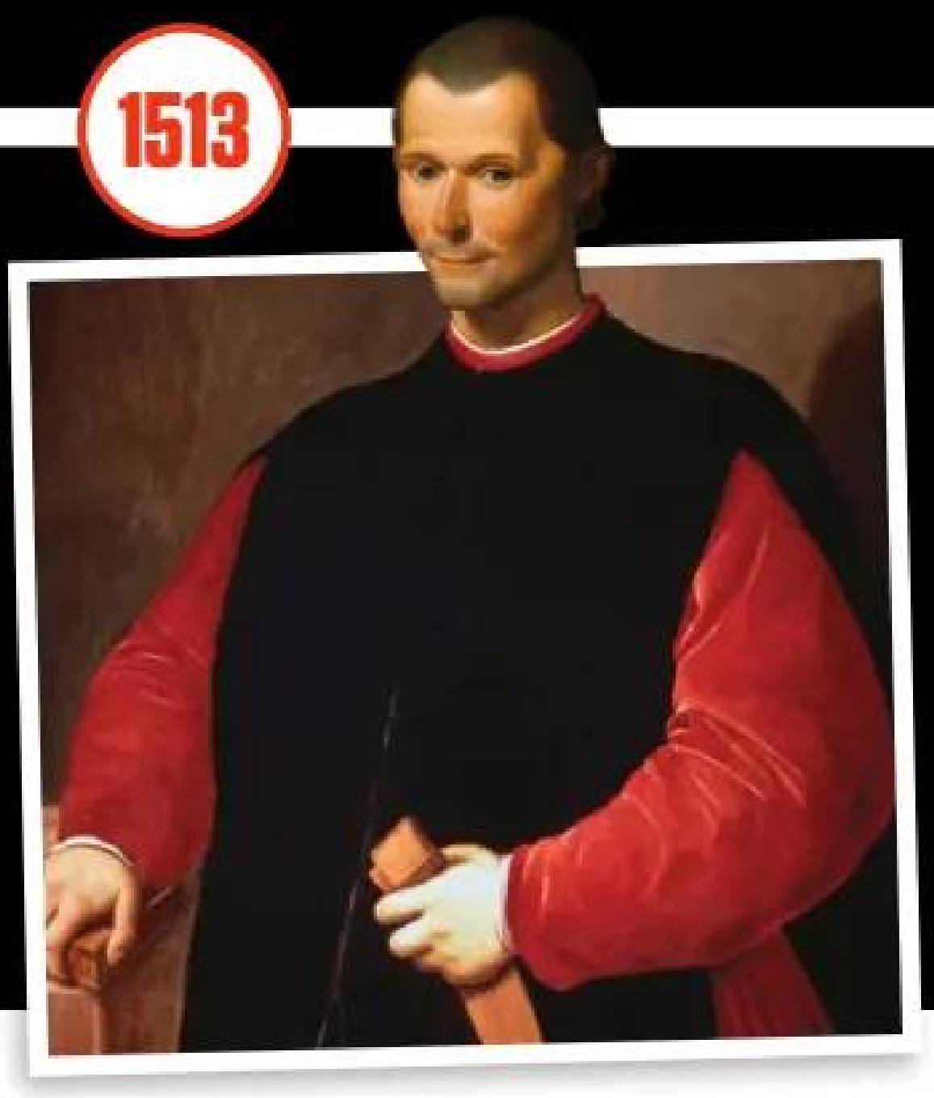
The Mayflower ship set out from Europe with 102 English passengers, hoping to form a colony in the New World where they could worship free from the interference of the Church of England. A contract, known as the Mayflower Compact, was drawn up and signed by 41 of the male passengers. This agreement explained how the group was forming a "body politic" in a new colony and set out how they would enact laws and constitutions for the "general good of the colony". The compact has been claimed as foundational to the democratic history of the United States.

NOBLE DEMOCRACY

1505

The Commonwealth of Lithuania-Poland enjoyed a form of democracy sometimes called the Golden Liberty. Every noble, around 10% of men, had the right to vote in the election of the king.

1513



LOCAL ELECTIONS

16TH CENTURY ONWARDS

Many Europeans experienced democratic elections in various local institutions such as trade guilds and religious communities. Towns with local councils had limited authority to govern municipal affairs but also protected citizens' rights.

MACHIAVELLIAN DEMOCRACY

1517

While Niccolo Machiavelli (left) is best known for amoral politics of *The Prince*, in his work *Discourses on Livy* he describes how republics and democracies have historically achieved the greatest levels of wealth and power.

HOUSE OF BURGESSES

1619

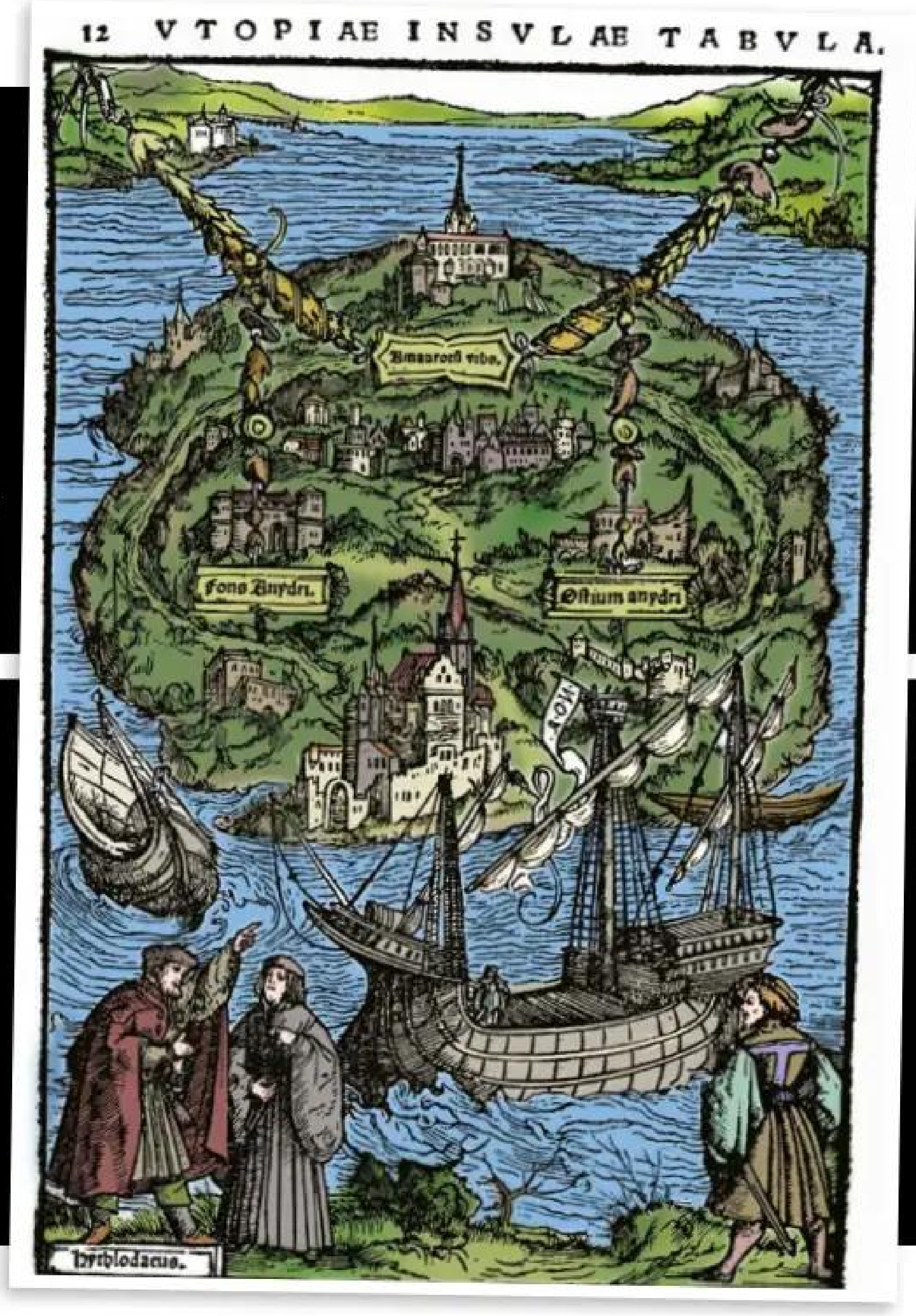
The Virginia House of Burgesses was convened with 22 elected members. This marked the first democratically elected government in the North American colonies, albeit with limited executive functions.

1620

IMAGINARY REPUBLICS

16TH CENTURY

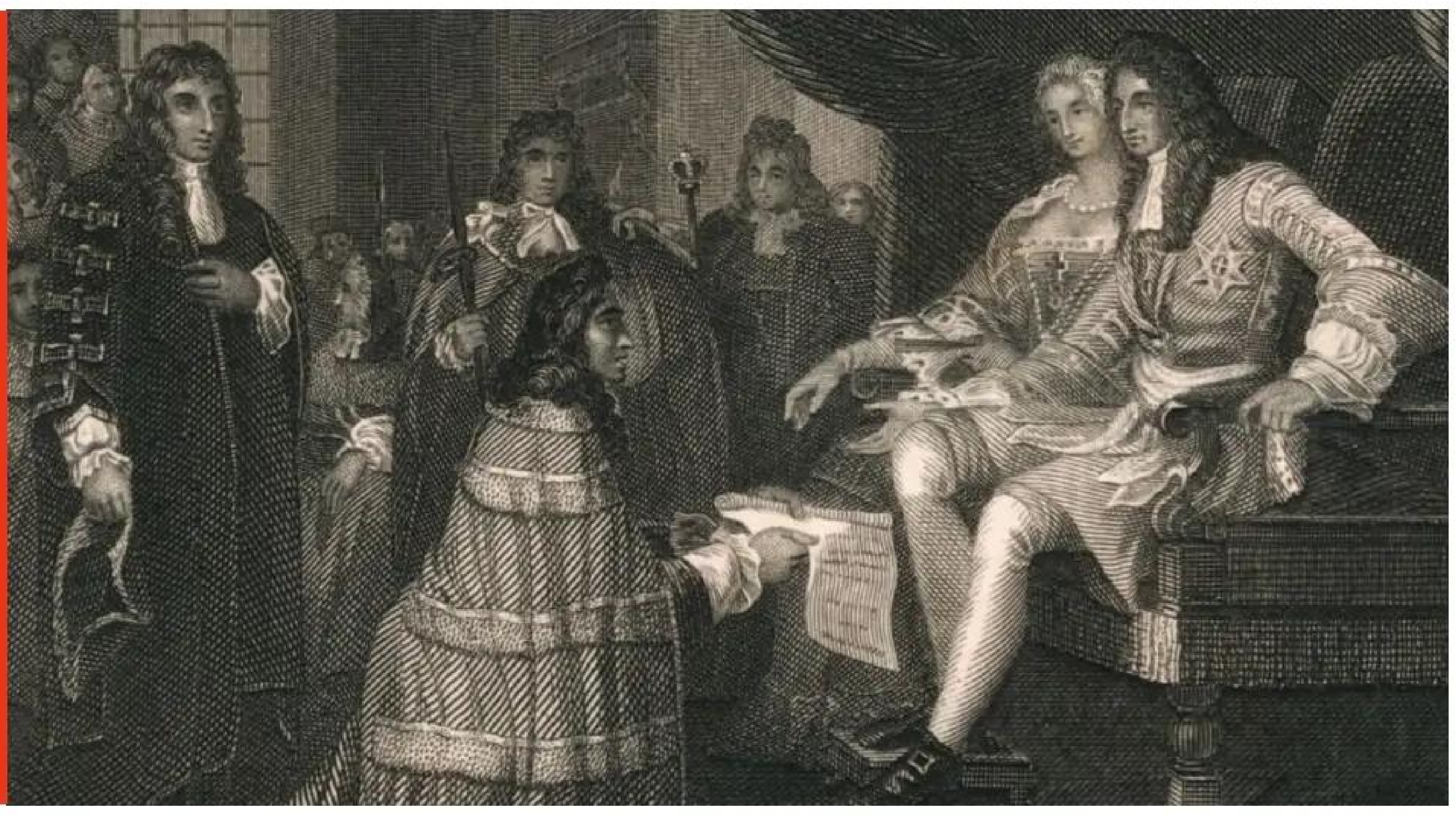
Humanists revered the classical works of Rome and Greece and renewed interest in ancient democracy and republics. Thomas More's *Utopia* describes an island with a representative council who elected a prince to rule (depicted right).

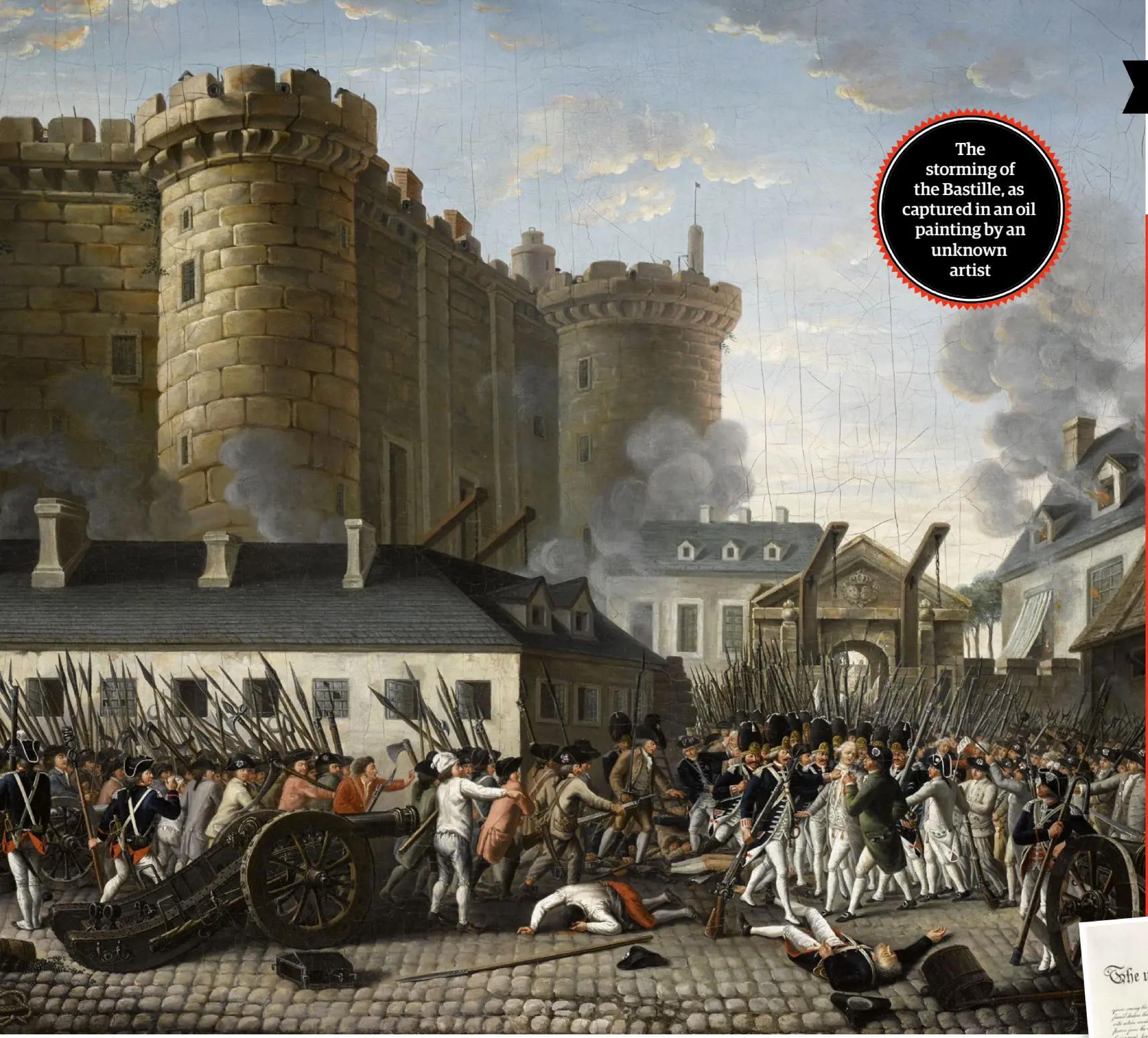


1689 BILL OF RIGHTS

ENGLAND

Annoyance with the Catholic King James II led to the English Parliament inviting his daughter, Princess Mary, and her husband, William of Orange, to take the throne. In 1688, in what became known as the Glorious Revolution, James was driven from England. Parliament passed an act in 1689 that set out the limitations of royal power by affirming the traditional liberties of England. This Bill of Rights enshrined the right to hold free elections, hold regular parliaments, and that each member of parliament could not be punished for things said in parliament. William and Mary granted royal assent to this act and it became a cornerstone of English democracy.



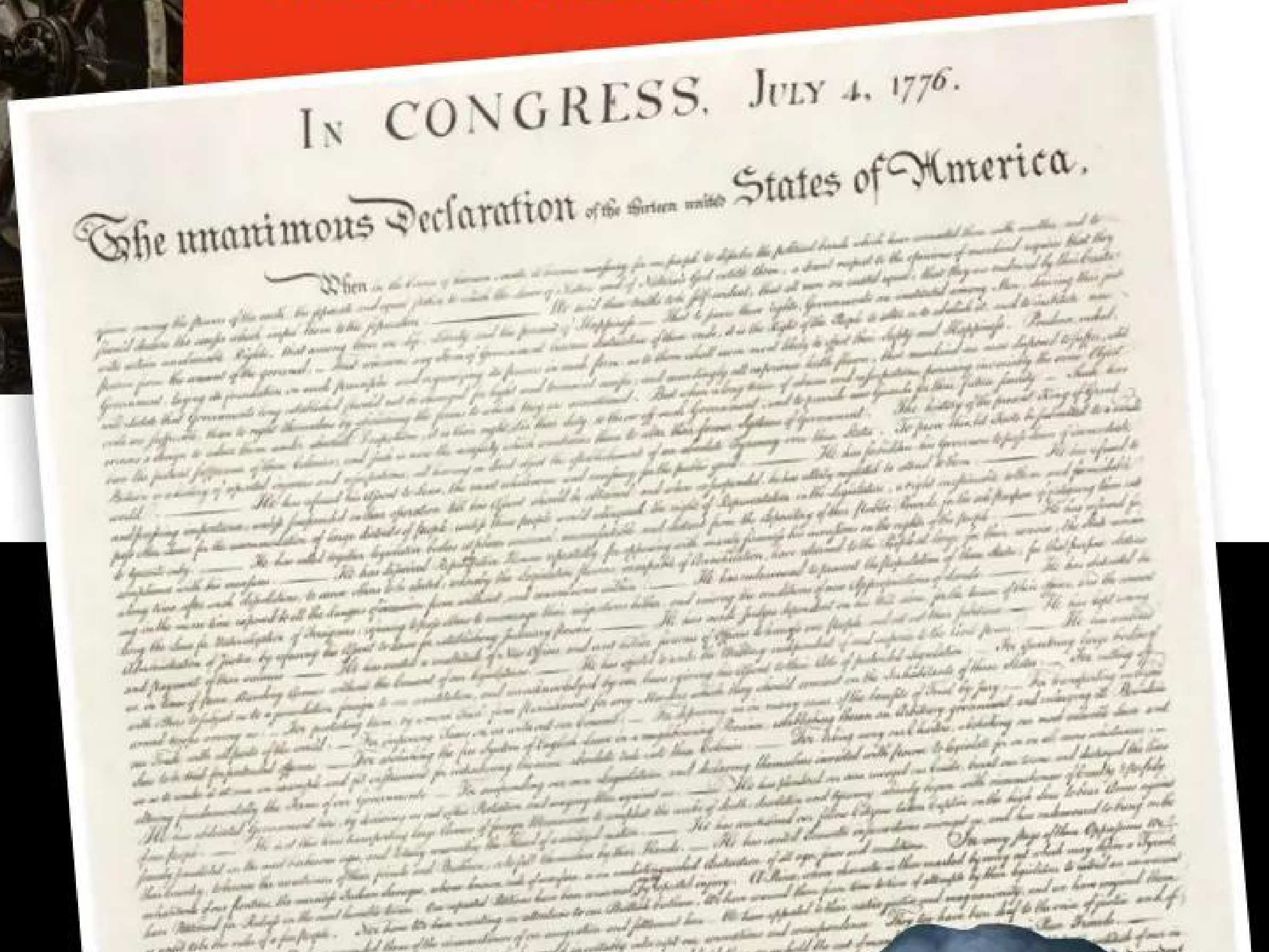


The storming of the Bastille, as captured in an oil painting by an unknown artist

1789 FRENCH REVOLUTION

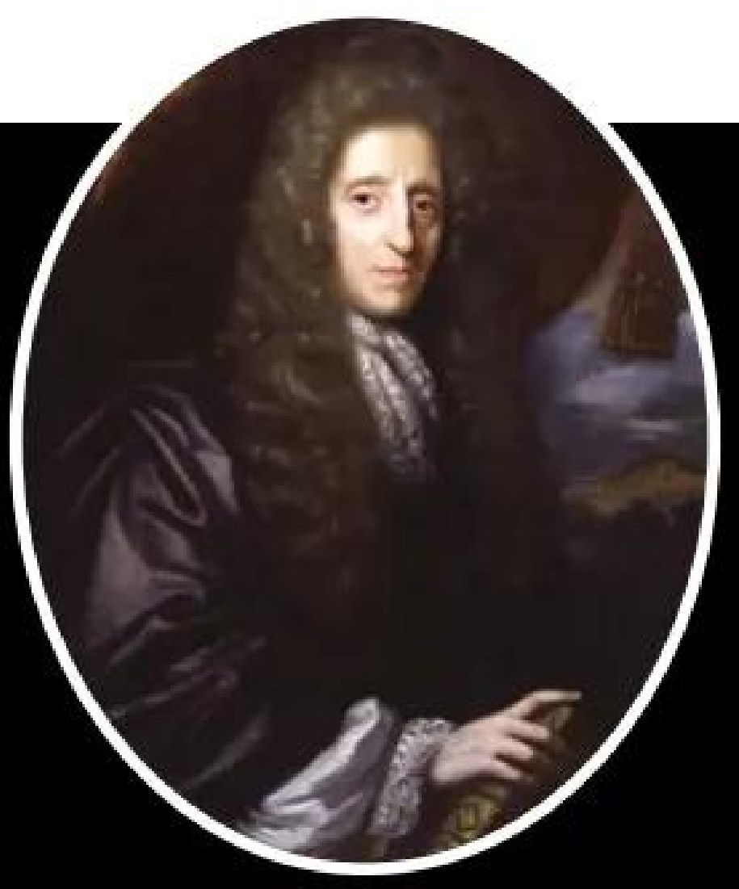
FRANCE

Economic crisis led to the French King Louis XVI calling the Estates General (elected representatives) together to discuss the best way to solve the problems facing France. When they were unable to reach an agreement there were outbreaks of rioting, including the storming of the Bastille, which led calls for a constitutional monarchy. The representatives of the lower classes created a National Assembly and issued a 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen', which based the legitimacy of the government on elections and social equality. In 1792 the monarchy was abolished and Louis XVI executed in 1793.



In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776.

The unanimous Declaration of the thirteen united States of America,



DEMOCRATIC THEORY

17TH – 18TH CENTURY

European philosophers created an intellectual framework supporting democratic theory against arbitrary rule by monarchs. The writings of John Locke (left) justified revolution against any ruler who governed without the consent of the governed.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

1776

The Continental Congress formally declared that 13 British colonies in North America were independent of the British crown (right). One of the causes of the American Revolution was lack of democratic representation in the British Parliament.

1689

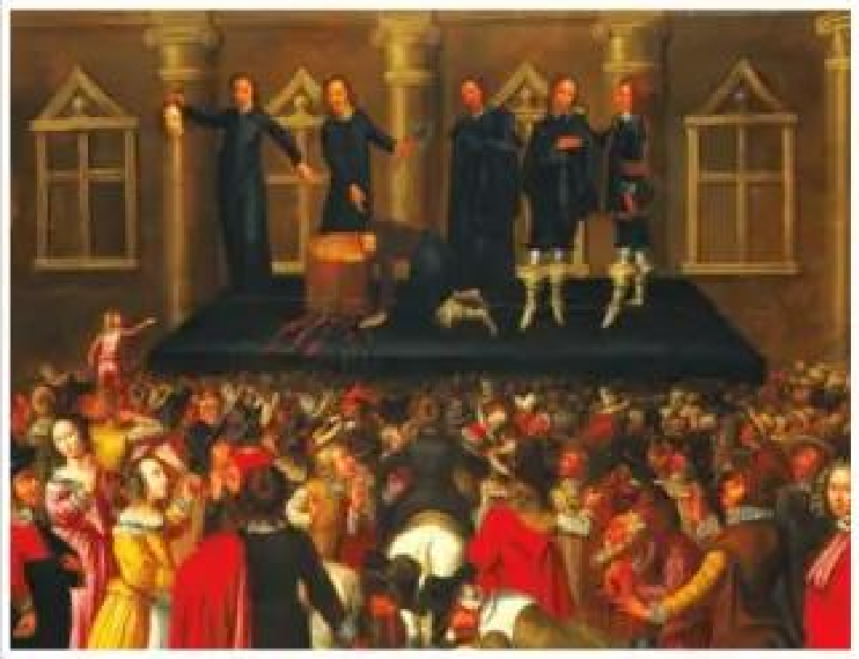
1789

1789

ENGLISH COMMONWEALTH

1649

Following the execution of King Charles I (right), the House of Commons passed laws abolishing the monarchy and House of Lords to create a Commonwealth governed as a democratic republic.



ATTEMPTED REFORMS

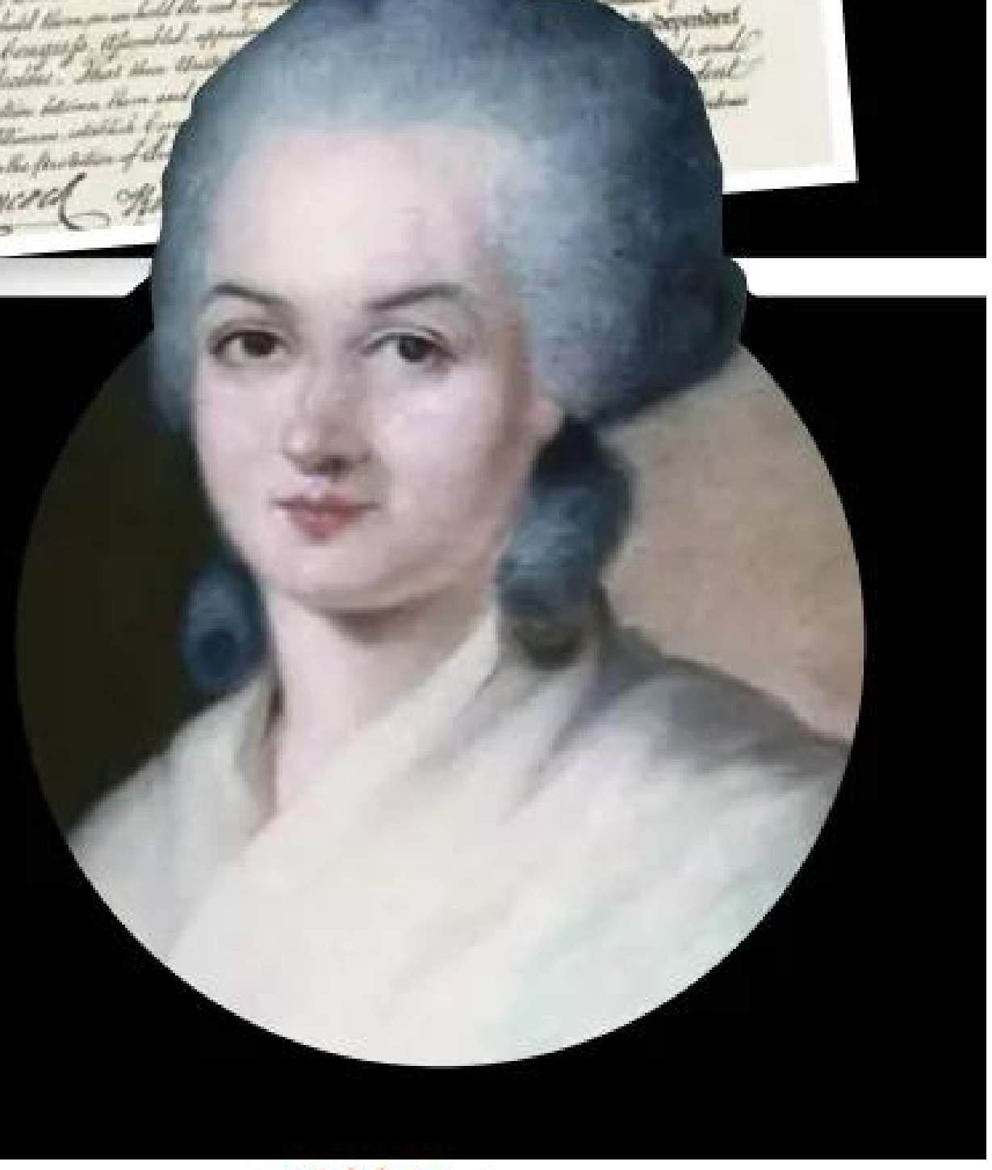
1729

Bribery was widespread in British elections with candidates often paying electors large sums in return for votes. Despite a Bribery Act passed in 1729 it remained common for voters to receive gifts.

THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN

1791

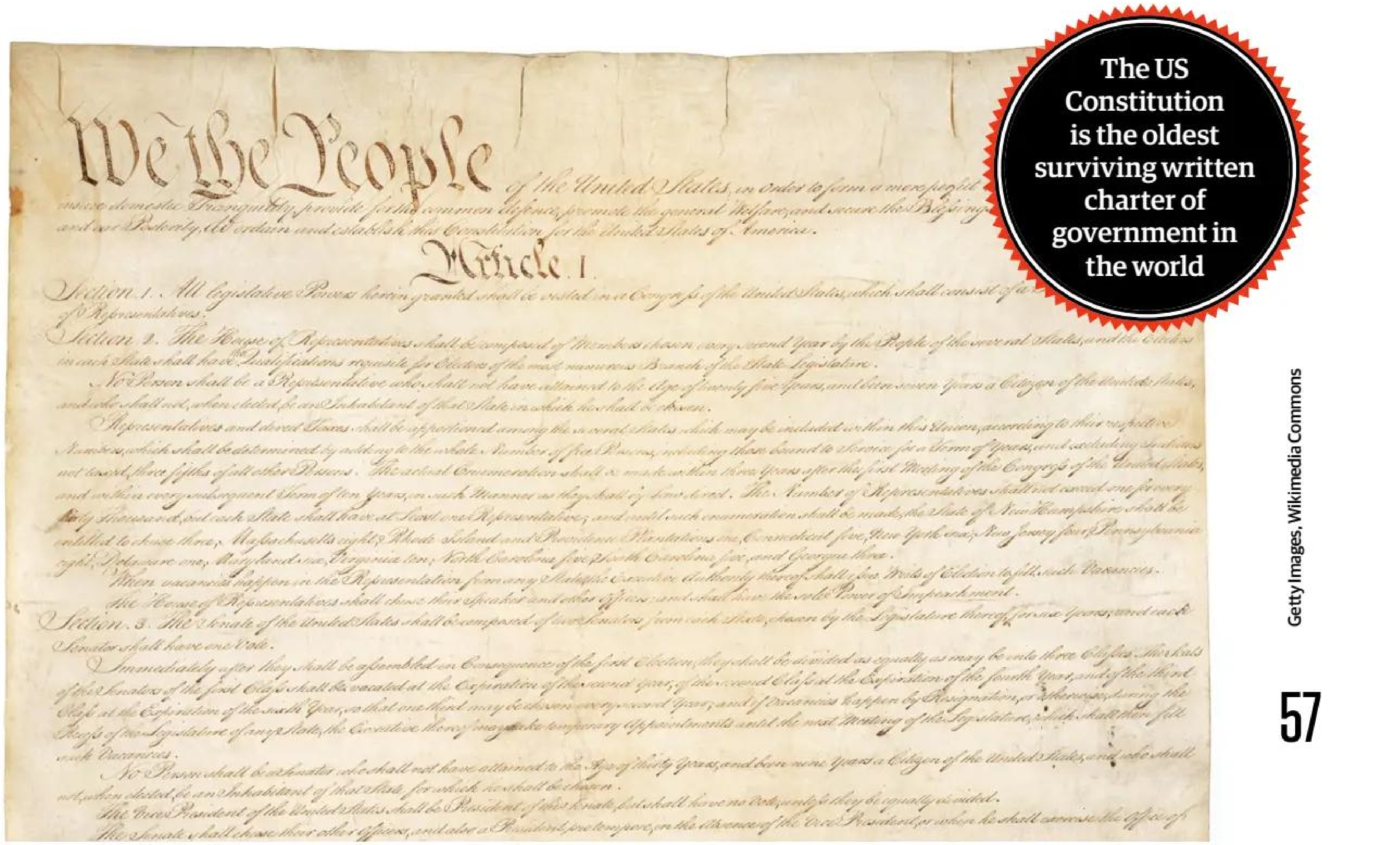
Olympe de Gouges (right) answered the *Declaration of the Rights of Men* with her own treatise in defence of the rights of women, saying men and women should be given the same rights – including democratic ones.



1789 AMERICAN CONSTITUTION

UNITED STATES

The successful rebellion of the 13 colonies from England gained the new states independence but questions still remained about how they would govern themselves. A constitutional convention met in 1787 to discuss the framing of a document that would lay out the formation of a new federal government for the states. Many proposals for what form this government should take were presented and eventually a compromise was reached. The federal government would be formed of executive, legislative, and judicial branches to ensure a balance of powers, and representation would be through elections. In 1789 the new constitution went into effect and the United States was created.



We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect

Article. I

The US Constitution is the oldest surviving written charter of government in the world

Getty Images, Wikimedia Commons

DEMOCRACY IN MESOAMERICA

The Greeks and Romans weren't the only ancient civilisations that developed democratic systems

Written by Bob Smith

Mesoamerica, a region that we now recognise as Mexico and Central America, hosted three millennia of human civilisation before the Spanish colonisation of the area began in the late 15th century. A leading power in Mesoamerica at that point was the Aztec Empire, the Triple Alliance of the city-states Tenochtitlan, Texcoco and Tlacopan, which derived income from tributes paid into the imperial coffers from the areas it controlled, backed by the military and aristocracy – in that sense, it was a recognisable autocracy.

However, the political history of Mesoamerica is also notable for its proto-democracies, settlements where at least some democratic elements were present. One example is the region's largest city, Teotihuacán, which – the evidence suggests – cast off its theocracy and taste for human sacrifice around 300 CE, constructing hundreds of spacious apartments for its people on a grid system and relinquishing any central authority.

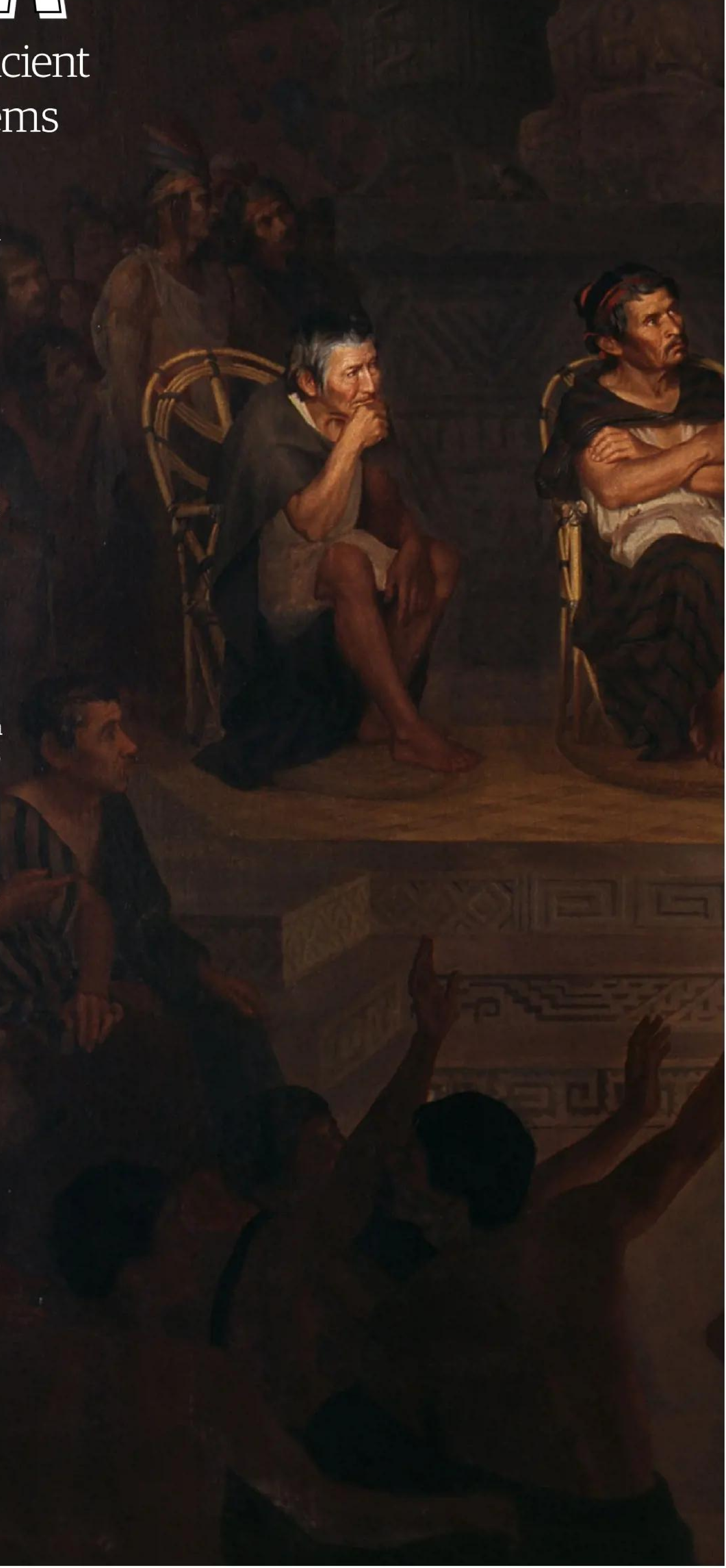
Archaeological evidence also suggests that the city of Monte Albán was somewhat democratic, simply because it lacked any royal images, palaces or tombs stuffed with wealth. Similarly, there was the settlement of Tres Zapotes, whose layout also omitted anywhere for a traditional monarch to live or rule. Instead, it contained four public plazas where it is thought that separate factions cooperated in the city's administration.

The most widely-documented Mesoamerican city-state proto-democracy was Tlaxcala, near what is now the Mexican state of Puebla. According to contemporary sources, it was a republic, running a form of collective government based on a council of 50 to 200 senators, elected through a gruelling process and answerable to its population of 150,000 people.

According to *Crónica De La Nueva España* (1563) by Francisco Cervantes de Salazar (one of the first rectors of the University of Mexico), the pivotal moment for the Tlaxcalans came in 1519, when the invading Spanish army led by Hernán Cortés arrived and engaged them in battle. Thanks to later negotiations between the two sides and a mature, deliberative consultation process that ensued within the city parliament, Tlaxcala is thought to have been a highly-functioning democracy, at least when it came to decisions about strategy and legislation. In the case of the Spanish conquistadors, speeches were made, gifts were exchanged, representatives were entertained and the focus lay squarely on reasoned argument and efforts towards compromise through lengthy debate – one of the central hallmarks of a democratic system.

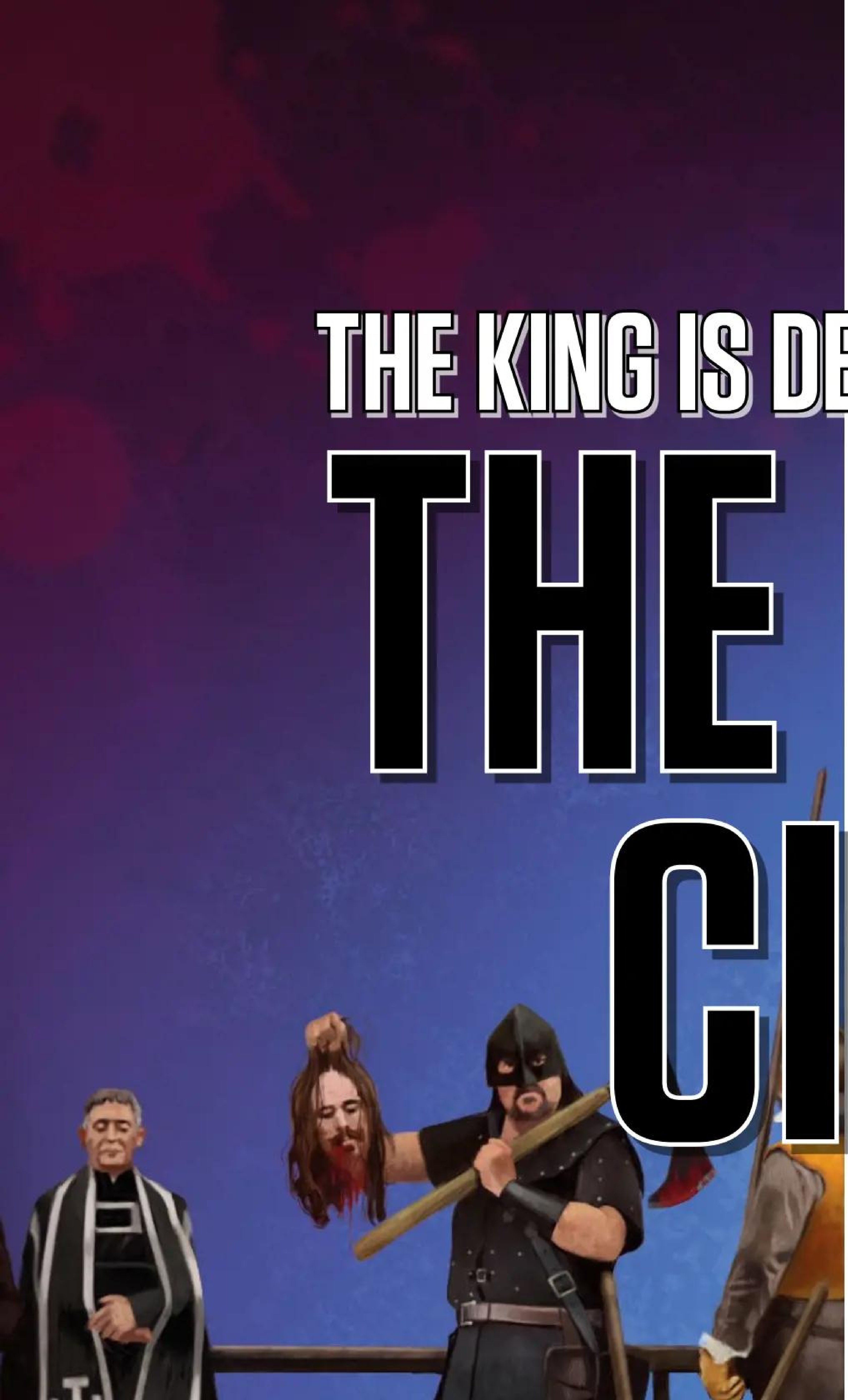
It was this rational process that led to the downfall of Tlaxcala, whose final decision was to ally with Cortés rather than engage him in war, after agreeing with him that the Spanish forces would help them defeat their enemies, the Aztec Empire. Supplying Cortés with 6,000 soldiers and much-needed shelter, Tlaxcala and its new European allies eventually overcame the Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán in 1521.

However, the Tlaxcalans subsequently became subjects of the Spanish Crown and saw their autonomy removed within a few decades. Some three centuries later, when Mexico finally cast off the Spanish yoke, their fate was to be regarded as traitors.



This painting by Rodrigo Gutiérrez, 1875, depicts an assembly where the chiefs of Tlaxcala are discussing Cortés' proposed alliance

Wikimedia Commons

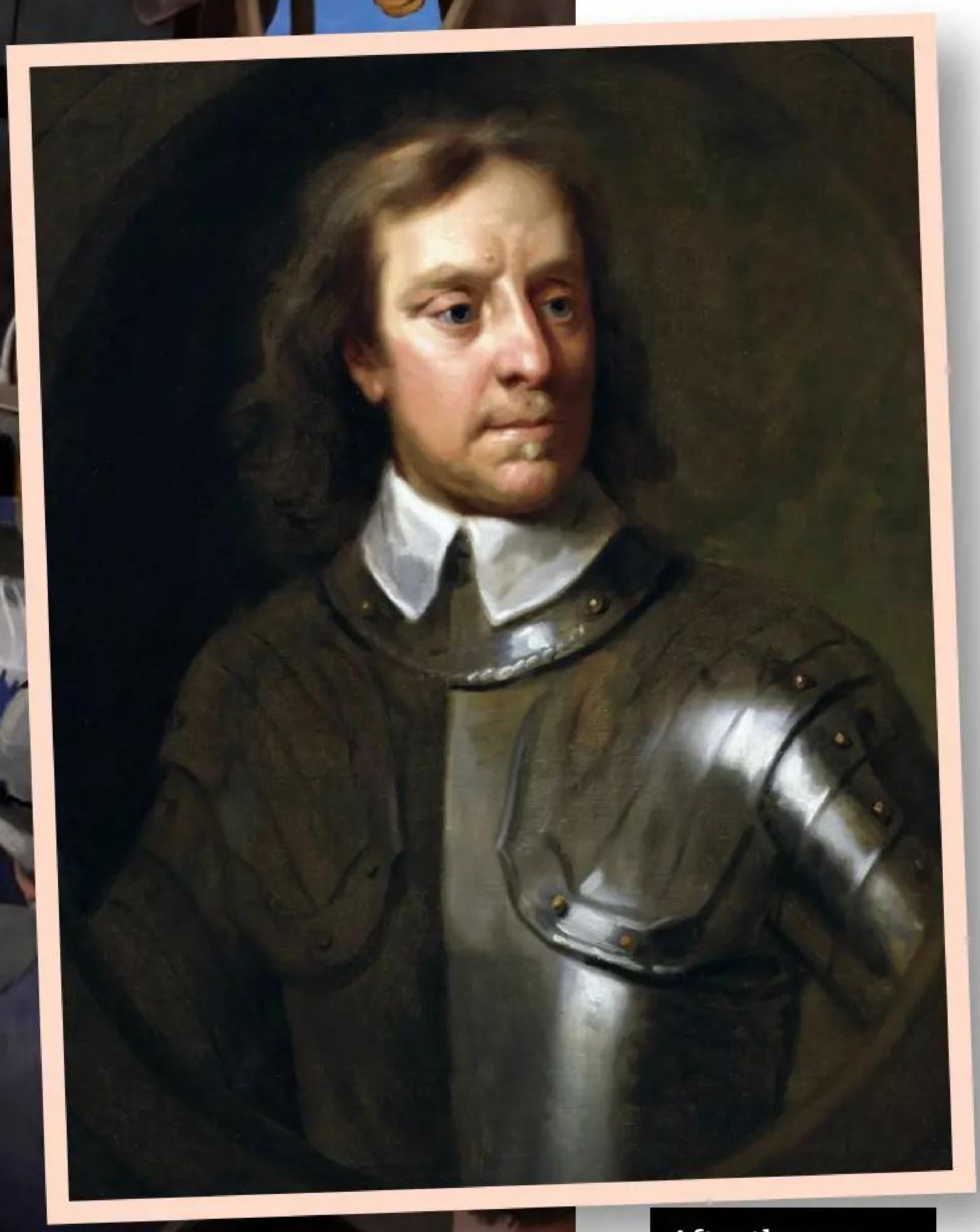


THE KING IS DEAD, LONG LIVE PARLIAMENT

THE ENGLISH CIVIL WAR

How this defining conflict led to a uniquely English approach to democracy

Written by Edoardo Albert



After the war, Cromwell served as Lord Protector of the newly established Commonwealth of England

No one wanted a war. In the early 1640s, when the tensions between Charles I and Parliament were growing, none of the parties believed their disagreements would lead to open conflict. But a series of mistakes, misunderstandings, missteps and the sheer momentum of events pushed them into a situation where they all came to believe that their only recourse was war.

This does not mean that the English Civil War was preventable. It was probably inevitable, a result of the forces unleashed by the Reformation in the previous century. Then, the monarchy and a fervent section of the nobility had forced a change of religion upon a reluctant people. But while a century of Tudor propaganda had ensured that England would no longer be a Catholic country, the reign of the Stuarts saw the struggle to define what sort of Protestant nation England would become.

To add political fire to this religious mix, the King and Parliament became identified with different social strands in the country. In England, Parliament sat at the king's pleasure: he had the authority to dissolve Parliament whenever he saw fit. When Charles I and Parliament came into conflict over Parliament's refusal to raise the taxes the Crown needed, Charles simply dissolved Parliament and ruled on his own. However, Charles's powers remained limited: the Crown could not effectively rule without the aid of the gentry.

When a continuing lack of funds forced Charles to recall Parliament, the conflict between Crown and Parliament resumed and intensified. Tensions rose, positions hardened, and all attempts to stop the drift to war failed. On 22 August 1642, Charles raised the royal standard: the English Civil War had begun.

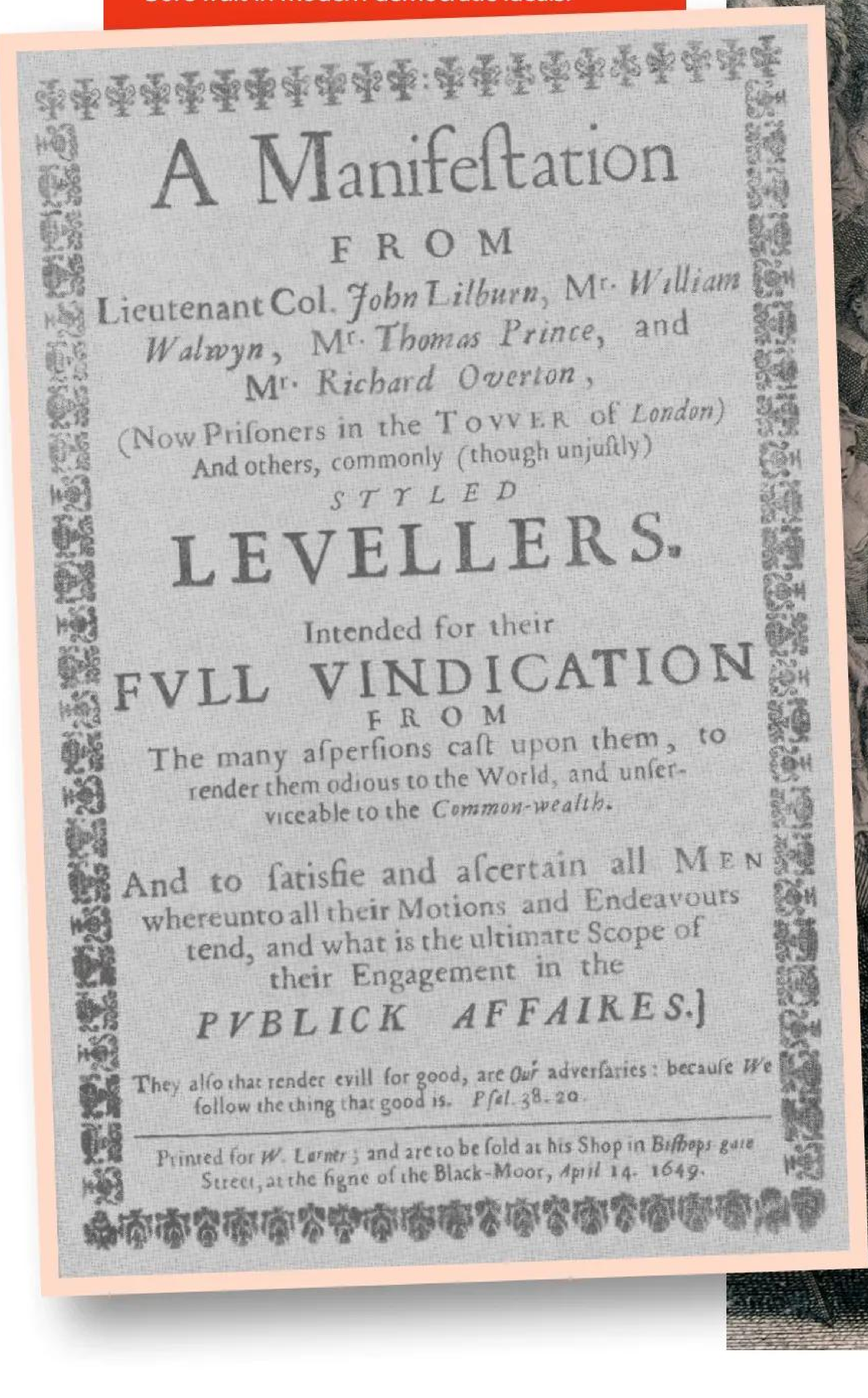
Joe Cummings, Getty Images

SECTS & SAINTS

Radicalism did not start the Civil War but war fomented radicalism. With the established church abolished and freedom of religion (except for Catholics) supposedly guaranteed with the Parliamentary victory, many new religious sects began and other, older ones, gained new adherents. Foremost among these were the Levellers, who advocated for an extension of suffrage to include most adult males, as well as religious toleration. Their advocacy of government by representatives of the people was the first formulation of modern ideas of democracy.

Other sects were more extreme. The Diggers believed that all land should be held in common and, to prove that, started digging and planting common land. The Ranters argued that the indwelling spirit freed them from normal moral restraints: their enemies accused them of nakedness and fornication. The Fifth Monarchists believed that the execution of Charles I had inaugurated a new era, in preparation for the Second Coming of Christ, when the old laws no longer applied.

All these sects were a product of the ferment and uncertainty of the time. However, that ferment did produce genuinely new ideas of participation in power, particularly among the Levellers, which later bore fruit in modern democratic ideals.



A Manifeſtation
FROM
Lieutenant Col. *John Lilburn*, Mr. *William Walwyn*, Mr. *Thomas Prince*, and Mr. *Richard Overton*,
(Now Priſoners in the TOVVER of *London*)
And others, commonly (though unjuſtly)
STYLED
LEVELLERS.
Intended for their
FVLL VINDICATION
FROM
The many aſperſions caſt upon them, to render them odious to the World, and unſerviceable to the *Common-wealth*.
And to ſatisfie and aſcertain all MEN whereunto all their Motions and Endeavours tend, and what is the ultimate Scope of their Engagement in the
PVBLICK AFFAIRES.]

They alſo that render evill for good, are *Our* adverſaries: becauſe *We* follow the thing that good is. *Pſal.* 38. 20.

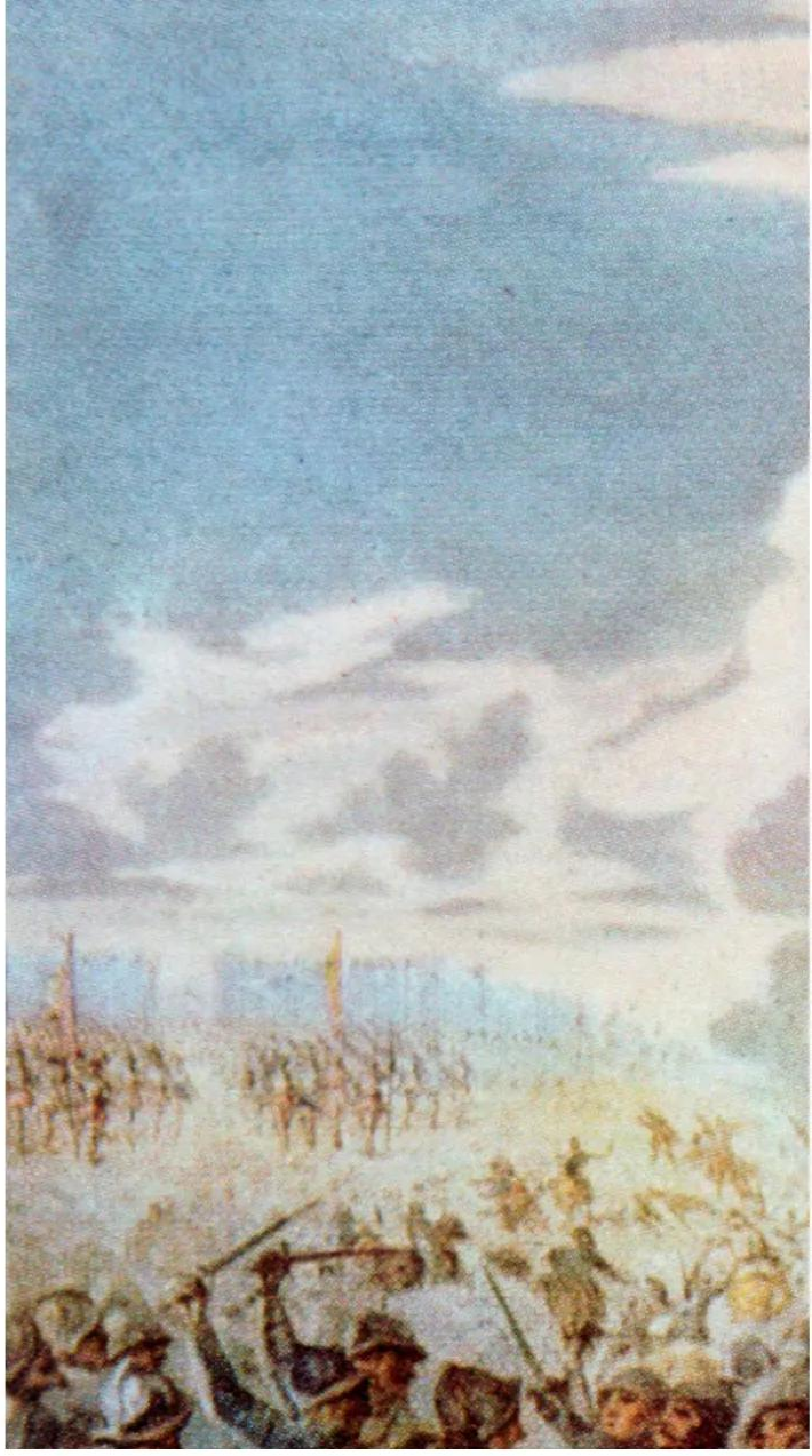
Printed for *W. Larner*; and are to be ſold at his Shop in *Biſhops gate Street*, at the ſigne of the Black-Moor, *April* 14. 1649.

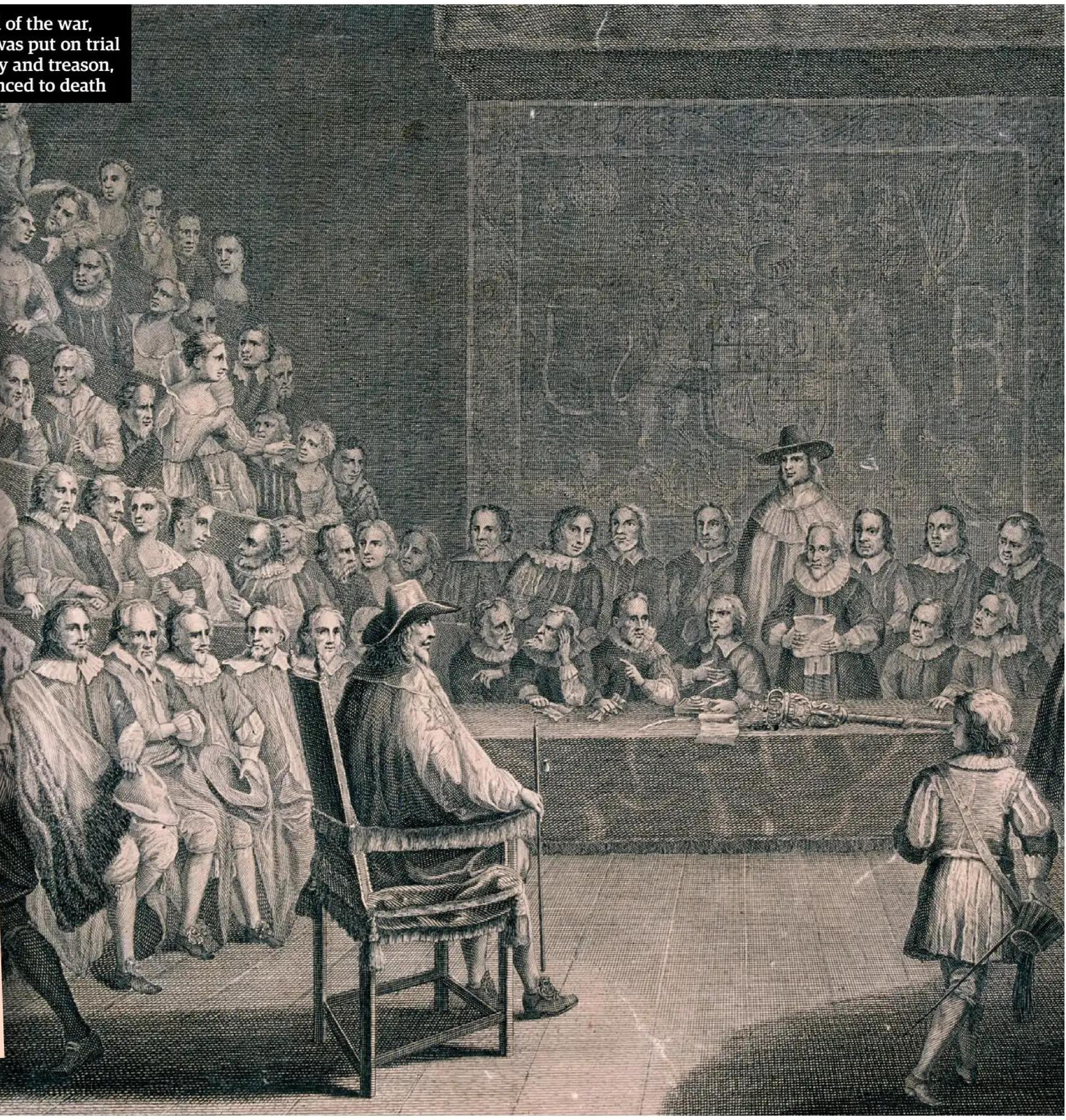
During years of conflict, England was torn apart. The countryside, the west, the north and Oxford supported the King. Parliament's strongholds were London and the other new merchant cities, and the richest parts of the south and the east. Families were split, friends turned against each other and armies marched across the country laying vast areas to waste.

The fundamental principle at the core of the Royalist cause was loyalty. Royalists fought for traditional views of king and faith. They supported an episcopal church and the right of kings to rule. Royalists despised disloyalty, viewing it as an abnegation of personal vows and an attack on the foundations of society: to them, the Parliamentarians were traitors.

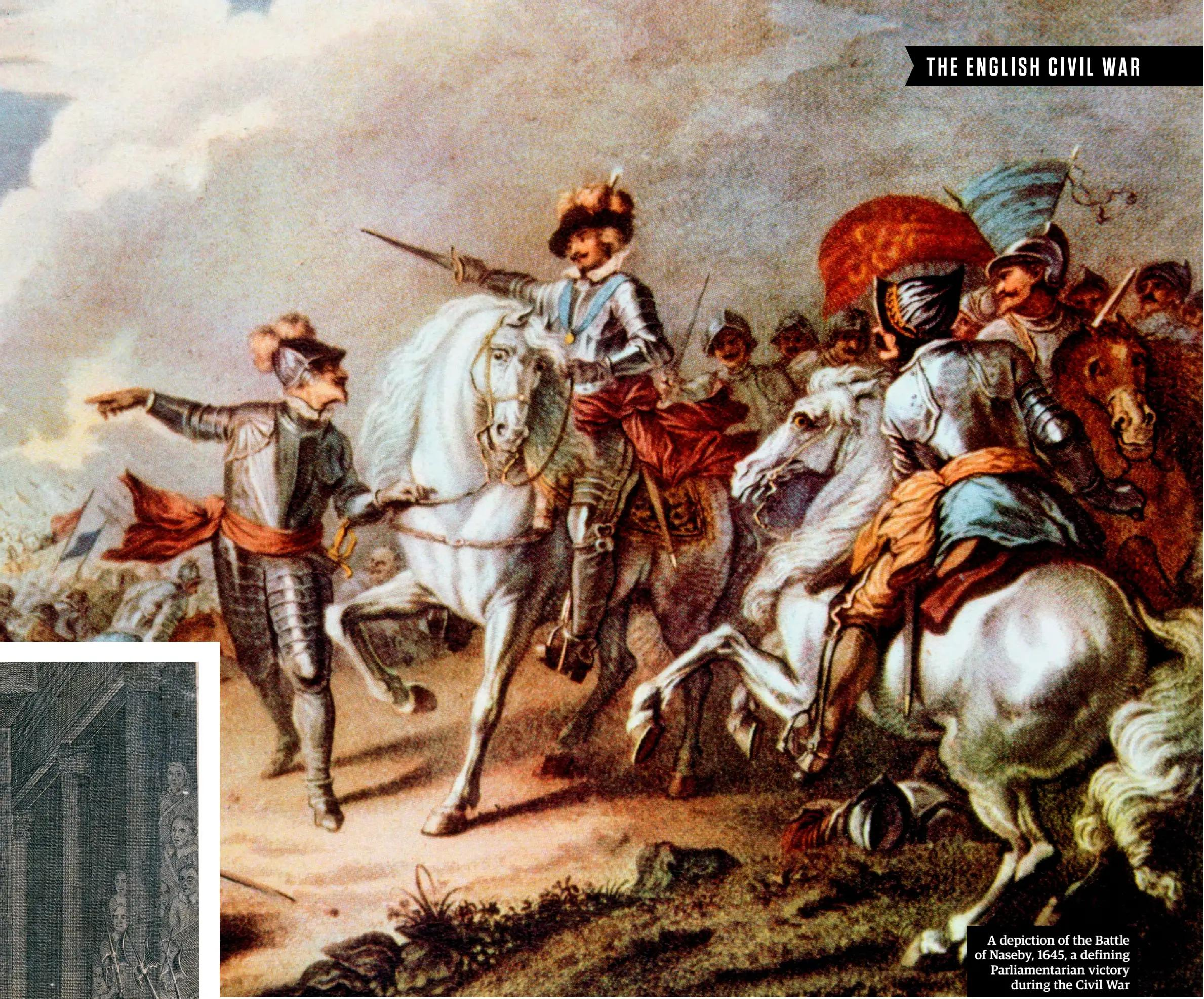
For the Parliamentarians, however, the war was for true religion and proper freedom. Their fundamental principle was consent: that the king must rule with the cooperation of his subjects. They walked in fear of hell, believing that salvation was a personal contract between each individual and God rather than being mediated through an established church. Parliamentarians believed they had to make a stand for the sake of their souls: the King was a tyrant and they would stand condemned if they did not stand against him.

The civil wars that spread through England, Scotland and Ireland involved one in eight men directly in the fighting. Civilians suffered even more when caught up in the path of armies that





At the end of the war, Charles I was put on trial for tyranny and treason, and sentenced to death



A depiction of the Battle of Naseby, 1645, a defining Parliamentarian victory during the Civil War

> “The people of England proved less saintly than the Parliamentarians wished”

lived largely through requisition of supplies. The exact casualty figures of the conflict are still controversial, but only the First World War is comparable in terms of the proportion of the population directly affected.

At the war’s end, Charles was dead, beheaded in Whitehall, and Parliament was supreme. But the Commonwealth that succeeded royal rule proved unstable, held together only by the sheer force of Oliver Cromwell’s personality. The essential aim of the Puritan victors was to create a society of saints. Unfortunately for them, the people of England proved less saintly than the Parliamentarians wished. They clung to their old traditions and pleasures despite the Puritans’ efforts to force salvation upon them.

So when Cromwell died it was with an almost universal sense of relief that the nation welcomed Charles II back. As Charles rode from Dover to London crowds lined the roads, throwing flowers under the hooves of his horse. The returning king publicly acknowledged the cheers, while privately remembering the terror of fleeing in fear of his life a few years before.

The Restoration was a uniquely English settlement to the tensions that had led to the Civil War. The monarchy was restored as a symbol of unity and guarantor of continuity, but the king now ruled within the law and with the consent of the people. Kings no longer had a divine right to rule, and held their position in a contract with the people.

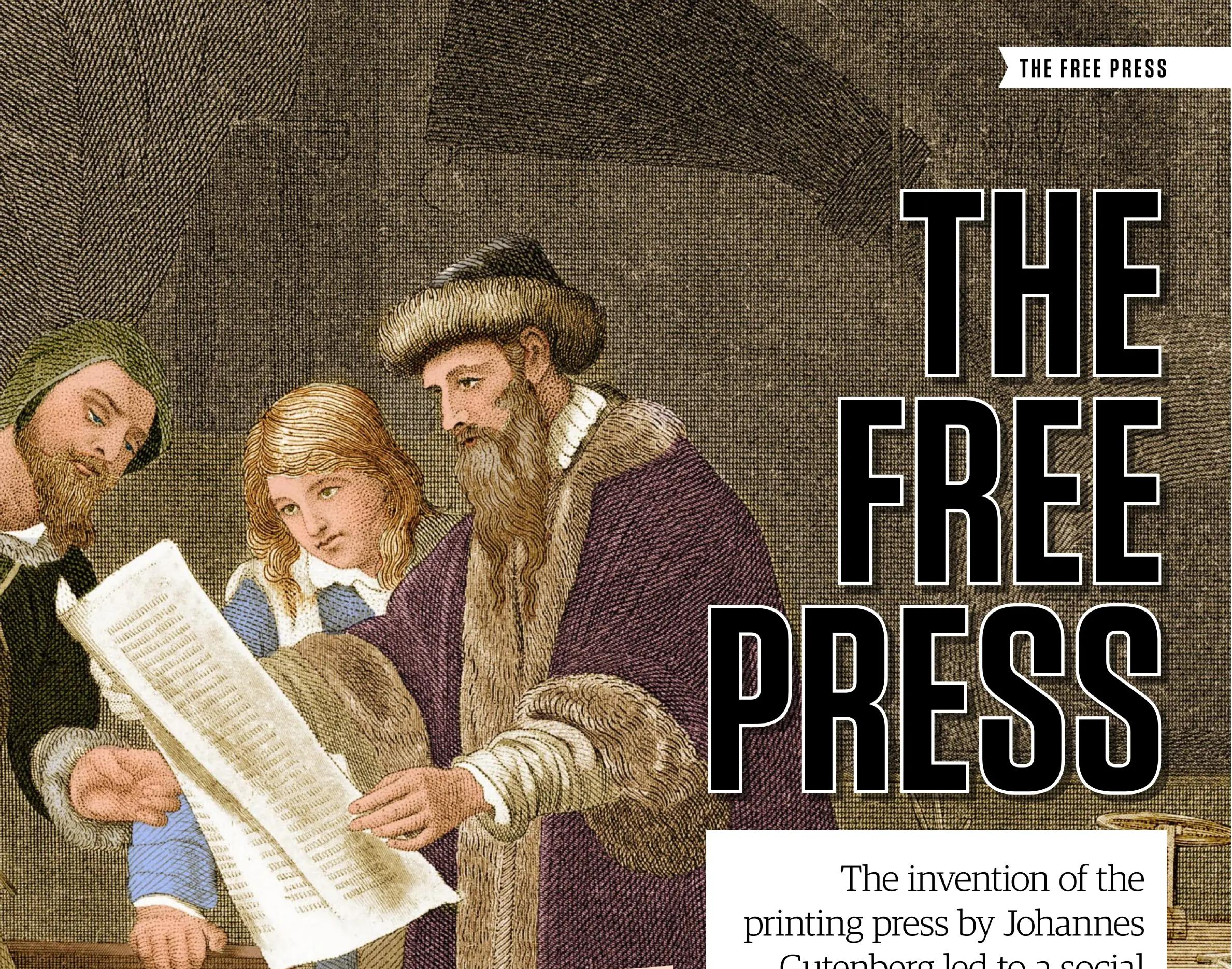
Parliament was restored as well, its powers enhanced but set within the framework of a constitutional monarchy. The principle of parliamentary supremacy had been established, but a supremacy set in the context of the checks and balances provided by the House of Lords, the established church and the monarchy.

And the English, as a people, set their faces for centuries to come against the religious and political fervours that had led to civil war. ‘Enthusiasm’ became a dirty word. England became a country that saw itself as moderate, with an established religion and monarch, where the freedoms of its people were guaranteed by the settlements of the Civil War and the Restoration.

Getty Images, Wikimedia Commons

A depiction of Johannes Gutenberg inspecting the first proof of the Bible from the printing press

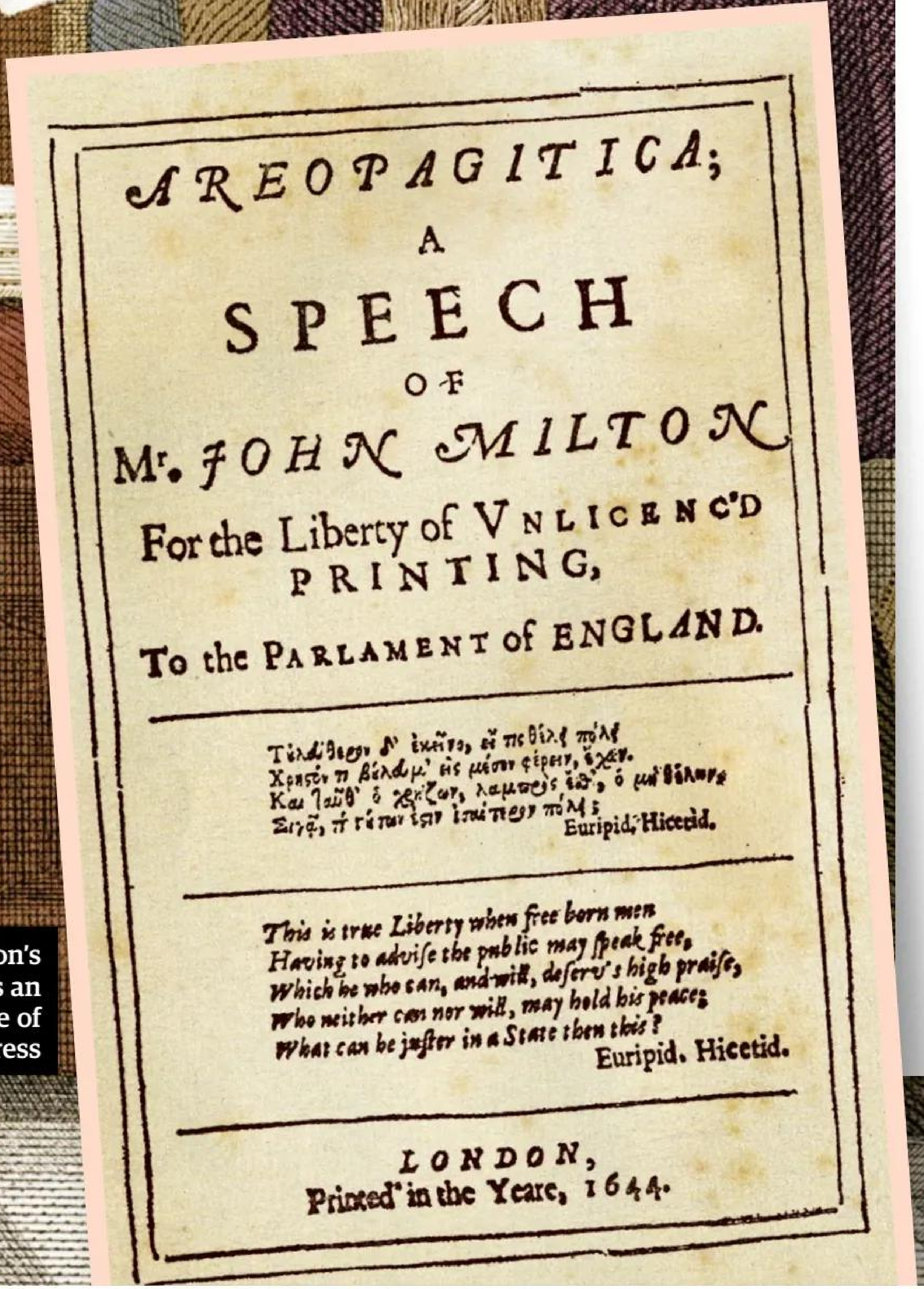
Written by June Woolerton



THE FREE PRESS

The invention of the printing press by Johannes Gutenberg led to a social revolution that powered political change, turning democratic ideas into reality

Written by June Woolerton



AREOPAGITICA;
A
SPEECH
OF
M^r. *JOHN MILTON*
For the Liberty of VNLICENC'D
PRINTING,
To the PARLAMENT of ENGLAND.

Τοὐλεύθερον δ᾽ ἐκεῖνο, εἴ τις θέλει πόλει
Χρηστόν τι βούλευμ᾽ εἰς μέσον φέρειν, ἔχων.
Καὶ ταῦθ᾽ ὁ χρῄζων, λαμπρὸς ἔσθ᾽, ὁ μὴ θέλων
Σιγᾷ, τί τούτων ἔστιν ἰσαίτερον πόλει;
Euripid. Hicetid.

This is true Liberty when free born men
Having to advise the public may ſpeak free,
Which he who can, and will, deserv's high praiſe,
Who neither can nor will, may hold his peace;
What can be juſter in a State then this?
Euripid. Hicetid.

LONDON,
Printed in the Yeare, 1644.

Right: John Milton's *Areopagitica* was an impassioned defence of the right to a free press

As the world's most powerful democracy began to take shape, one priority was clear. The First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America, published in 1791, states that Congress "shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press". The revolution that had led to the new nation had been powered by newspapers that spoke out about colonial governance. It followed a pattern seen in countries across Europe, as printing and passion for people power formed an alliance that would revolutionise the notion of power itself.

In 1455, as editions of Johannes Guternberg's printed Bible began to appear for sale in Europe, only around ten per cent of the population were literate. Books were the preserve of the ruling elite, handwritten on expensive materials and

Getty Images, Alamy

commissioned by the powerful for their own enjoyment. They were early echo chambers, recording what those paying for them wanted to hear, and inaccessible to the majority.

By 1500, early mechanised printing had spread throughout Europe with over 150 presses in Venice alone. Bibles made up the bulk of early mass-produced books, but the speed meant scope soon widened. Pamphlets, bringing new ideas to a wider audience, were widely printed. By the early 1600s, newsbooks discussing and criticising secular powers were in circulation.

In 1644, John Milton wrote *Areopagitica*, arguing against existing rules that meant all printed matter had to be approved before publication. As England's Civil War continued through the 1640s, newsbooks became hotbeds of ideas and were used by groups, such as the Levellers, to promote new philosophies, in their case equality and suffrage.

In 1655, Oliver Cromwell banned any newsbooks not authorised by him, an early autocratic attack on a free press. However, the end of licensing laws in 1695 brought a fresh impetus to newspapers and a wider dissemination of ideas around emerging democracy.

One of the main voices against licensing had been John Locke. His influential philosophy, centred on all people being equal and independent, was expressed in his argument that licensing and repression were like putting a man in chains in case he "use violence if his hands were free".

Locke was a leading voice in the Age of Enlightenment, which was integral to the development of new thinking and the emergence of democracy in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. Early printers had produced ancient Roman and Greek texts for their new customers and the spread of these ideas to a wider audience informed the Enlightenment, which promoted natural law. This promotion of the idea of liberty and that all humans have inherent rights impacted political development.

The Age of Liberty in the 18th century saw an erosion of monarchical power in some countries, including Sweden, where a Freedom of the Press Act was introduced in 1766. It ended official censorship of papers and enabled government activities to be published, a radical move opening officials up to public scrutiny for the first time.

However, other means were used to suppress newspapers that challenged the status quo, with Britain's Parliament introducing a stamp tax on newspapers in 1712. This kept increasing, making newssheets prohibitively expensive for many.

Dean Cites
Haldeman a

Mass book burnings were held in Nazi Germany to destroy publications deemed "un-German" by the state

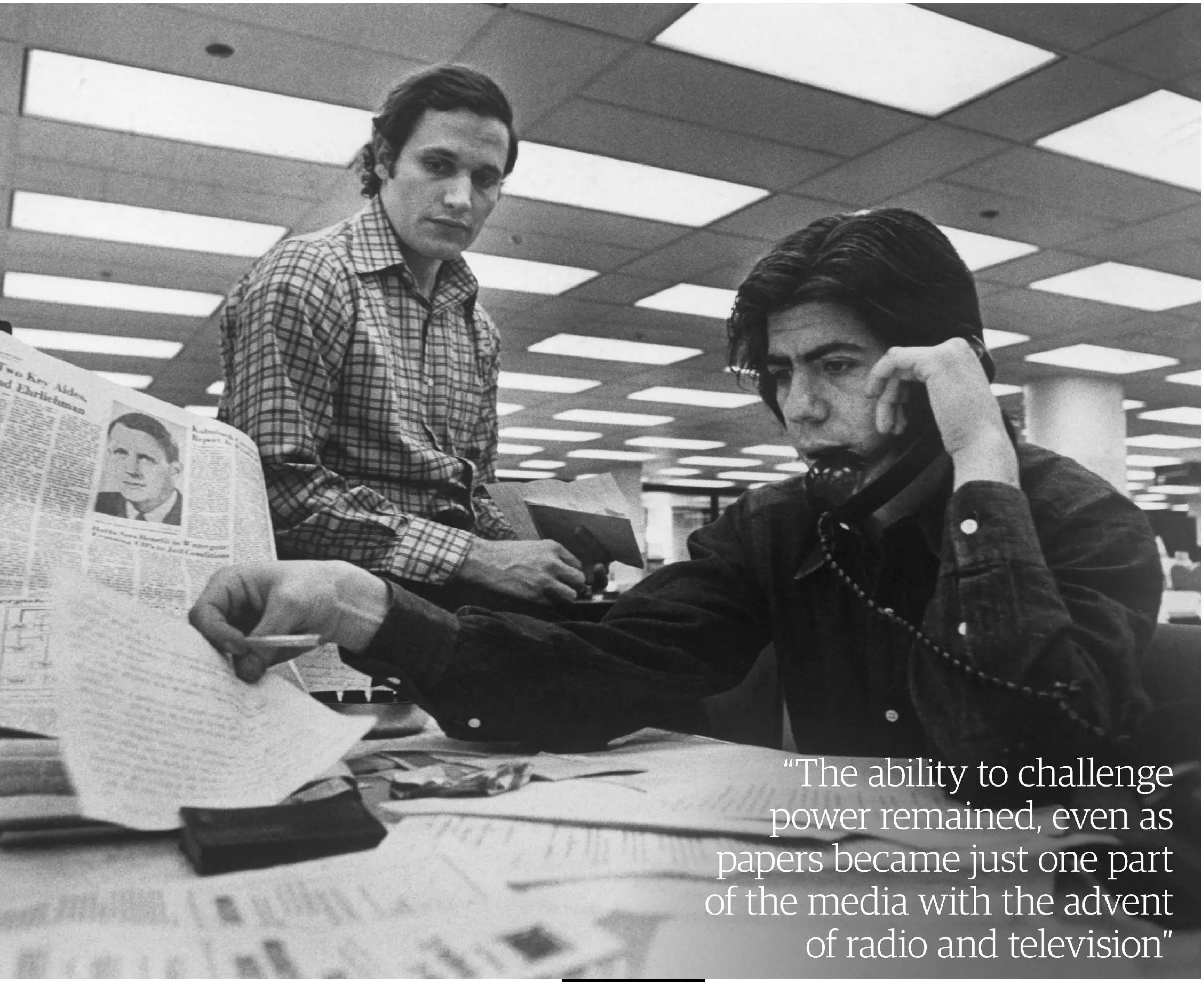
AUTHORITARIANISM VS THE FREE PRESS

Within weeks of assuming power in 1933, Hitler's new Nazi government took control of the press. The Ministry of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment was established under Joseph Goebbels. Its aim was to control every aspect of the media and use it to spread Nazi ideology.

Any opposing views were removed, with hundreds of papers closing and others being taken over. Journalists and editors were vetted and tightly controlled. They were given daily press releases and told what to write. Any deviation from this extreme censorship could lead to imprisonment.

The desire of authoritarian regimes to extinguish a free press remains a potent threat to democracy in all its forms. In 2024, with the rise of citizen journalism, online platforms are also targeted. Some international news organisations, including the BBC, have had their websites banned in countries with authoritarian regimes to restrict information available to their citizens. And in an age of citizen journalism, China, North Korea and Russia all currently ban access to X, formerly Twitter.

Elizabeth Cochran, aka Nellie Bly, was a pioneering investigative journalist



“The ability to challenge power remained, even as papers became just one part of the media with the advent of radio and television”

But papers were now an established means of sharing new, democratic ideas. They were inflamed by the writings of Thomas Paine, whose *Rights of Man*, published in 1791, argued that autocratic governments had to end if they defied the natural rights of their people. Paine was tried for seditious libel in England and convicted in absentia.

Libel, a claim that printed material brings a person or authority into contempt, was a well worn path for government suppression. However, it also became a mechanism for securing a free press. The trial of New York publisher, John Peter Zenger, for libel in 1734 after his paper criticised the colony's governor, ended in defeat for the authorities as the judge ruled what was said was true. Being correct is still an established defence against charges of libel.

Early newspapers were self-regulating, often strongly biased to a particular opinion and open to paid pieces to cover printing costs. But throughout the 19th century they developed, and investigative journalism became another way of holding authorities to account.

Above: The investigations of *Washington Post* journalists Bob Woodward (left) and Carl Bernstein (right) uncovered the Watergate scandal in 1972

By the 1900s, the US press ‘muckrakers’ were exposing major scandals linked to wider democratic rights, including the abuse of children as slave labour. Among the most famous exposés was the undercover work of Nellie Bly, who went into an asylum to expose maltreatment of patients.

The ability to challenge power remained, even as papers became just one part of the media with the advent of radio and television. In 1972, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein began an investigation for the *Washington Post* into a break-in at the headquarters of the Democratic party at the Watergate building. Their discovery of the involvement of Richard Nixon's campaign for re-election led to his fall from power.

Over 150 years earlier, as the *Penny Papers* in England challenged the government over ongoing taxes on the press, it told authorities that the people “are your master, instead of being your slave”. The free press continues as a voice for the many and across centuries, it has been a vital building block for democracy.

Getty Images

BUILDING A NATION

Finding common ground in government presented a major challenge as the American colonies emerged from revolution and set about building a nation

Written by Michael Haskew

The Founding Fathers of the United States, those men who led the American Revolution and then worked to establish a framework for the government of their new country, realised that simply declaring independence from Great Britain and achieving that independence through insurrection would not lead to long-term stability or serve as the firm footing for the colonies to survive as one nation.

In the midst of the War for Independence, a committee appointed by the Second Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia to draft a document that might bind the colonies together while preserving the rights of individual states in the context of a central government. The committee convened on 12 July 1776, just eight days after the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Sixteen months later, on 15 November 1777, a draft was presented to the colonies for ratification. Still, it took more than three years for all 13 to agree to the principles of the Articles of Confederation, which became effective on 1 March 1781.

The Articles created a Congress with specific powers, such as the conduct of foreign relations, making war and peace, settling boundary disputes, and establishing a common currency. However, those powers not expressly given to this relatively weak body in a so-called "league of friendship" were reserved for each state to "retain its sovereignty, freedom and independence, and every power, jurisdiction and right." Congress was not vested with the authority to levy or collect taxes or impose its decisions on the states. There was no provision for a chief executive or a judicial branch of government.

Towards the end of the revolution came the need to form a stable system of government for the fledgling nation

The Articles of Confederation were, by design, intended to curb the authority of a central government. After all, the current revolution was intended to throw off the yoke of an oppressive 'despot'. However, issues emerged soon enough that indicated the necessity of establishing a national government that would serve a nation of diverse beliefs, economic conditions and world views, a nation that was growing and whose inhabitants already numbered more than four million people.

The immediate catalyst for the discourse that resulted in the drafting of the Constitution of the United States occurred in the summer of 1786 when Daniel Shays led a group of disgruntled

After much deliberation and debate, the signing of the US Constitution took place in Philadelphia on 17 September 1787

Getty Images

> “They determined that a new, stronger national government was a prerequisite to stability and future prosperity”

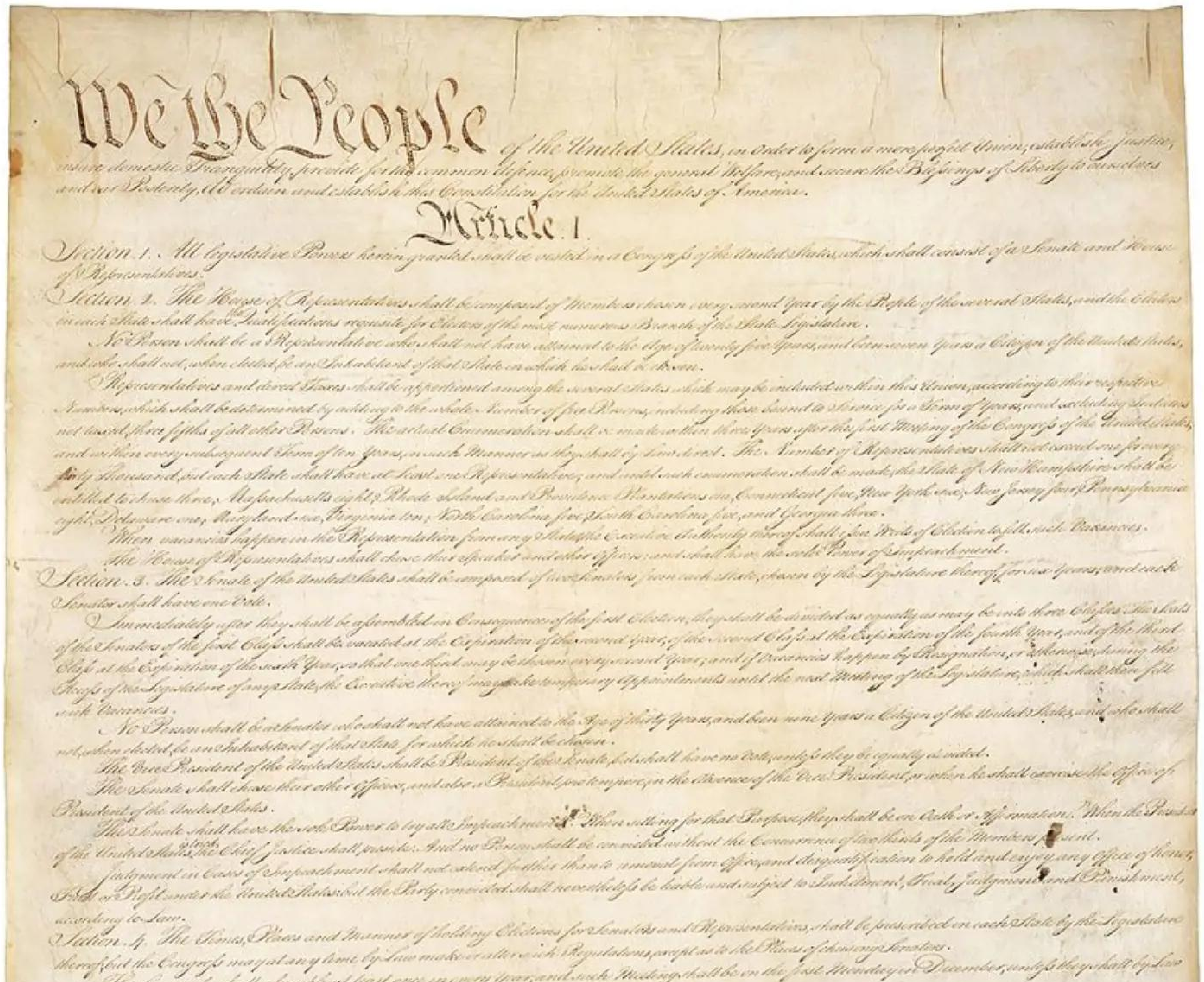
Massachusetts farmers in an uprising against creditors and others who they believed had made them the victims of exploitation. Shays's Rebellion lasted until June 1787, when the Massachusetts state militia put down the revolt. The national government had no authority to intervene, call up troops, or otherwise act to restore order. The message was clear. Another such threat might result in the total collapse of the national government, such as it was. Each state would then be left to its own devices, even to the extent that its neighbours were in peril of foreign intervention, annexation, or a descent into chaos.

At this critical moment in the life of the fledgling country, a core group of statesmen, including Alexander Hamilton, John Adams, John Jay, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington and others, determined that a new, stronger national government was a prerequisite to stability and future prosperity. Collectively, these men, along with numerous others, had already left their mark on the new nation. Jefferson authored the Declaration of Independence but did not attend the coming constitutional convention. The aging Franklin served on the committee of five that assisted in its final draft and served as ambassador to France during a critical period of the revolution. Hamilton, Jay and Madison authored the Federalist Papers that lucidly set out the tenets of the proposed Constitution. Hamilton, in fact, is rightly considered the father of the Federalist party and the architect of the nation's financial system. Madison shied away from the sobriquet ‘Father of the Constitution’, but his tremendous knowledge of history and varied forms of government, along with his interest in balancing states' rights with the need for a strong central administration, brought an immeasurable contribution.

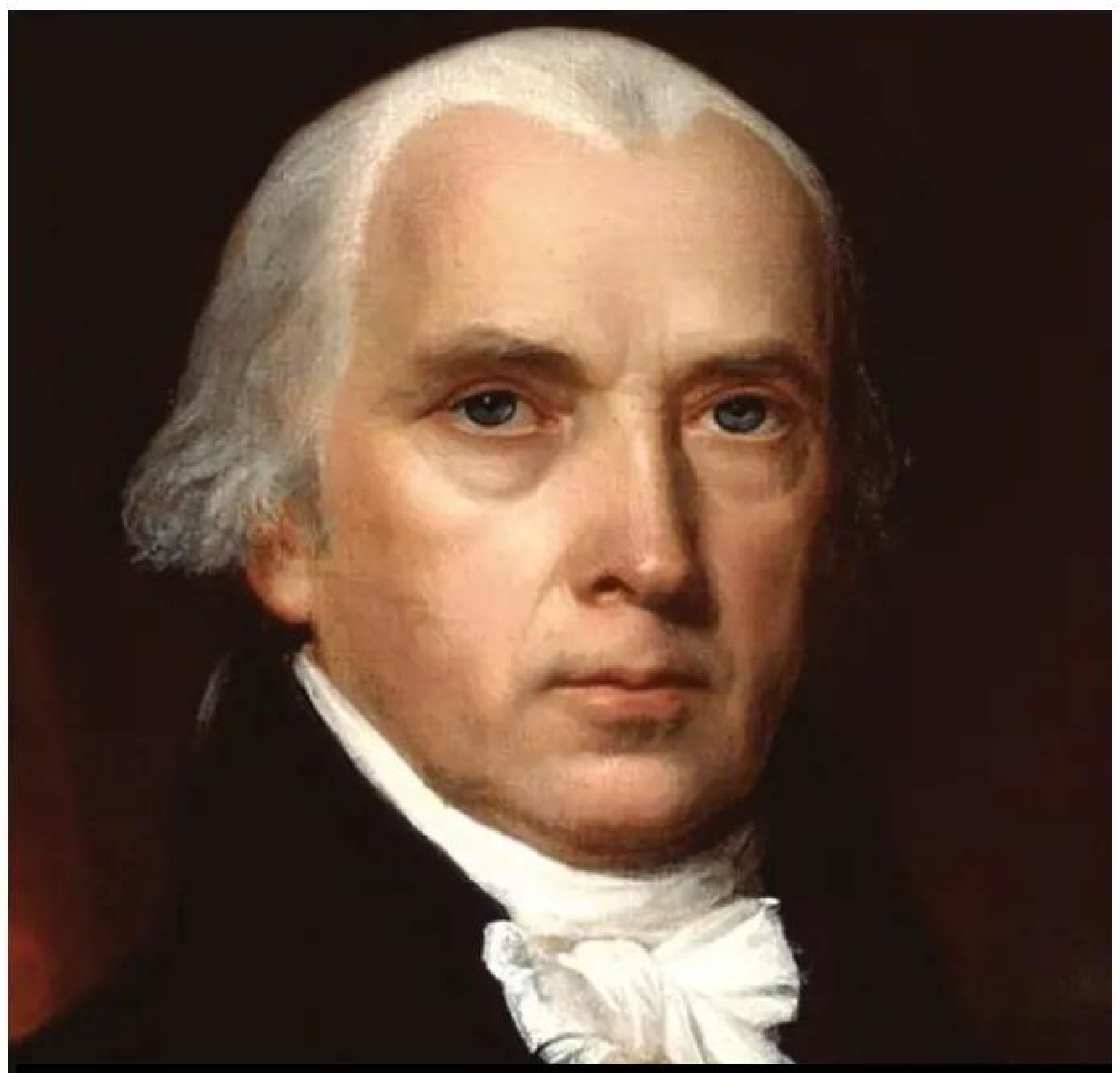
By early 1787, Washington had spent some time in retirement at Mount Vernon, his sprawling estate in Virginia. Called from repose to preside over the constitutional convention that would assemble in Philadelphia to determine a new form of national government, he offered his leadership to the country once again. “We are either a united people under one head, for Federal purposes, or we are 13 independent sovereignties, eternally counteracting each other.”

In the spring of that year, after 74 delegates had been chosen, the framing of the Constitution of the United States began. Recalcitrant Rhode Island refused to participate. Although their differences sometimes seemed insurmountable, the delegates agreed to a man that only a republic, its power to govern derived from the people, could accurately perpetuate the high principles for which the revolution had been fought. Heated debate swirled around the structure of the new government. Delegates from small states feared that the large states would dominate future deliberations if representatives to the proposed congress were elected only on the basis of population. Two gentlemen from Connecticut, Roger Sherman and Oliver Ellsworth, proposed a compromise, a bicameral legislature with a House of Representatives elected from each state according to population and a Senate with each state seating two representatives elected by the members of the House. It was genius.

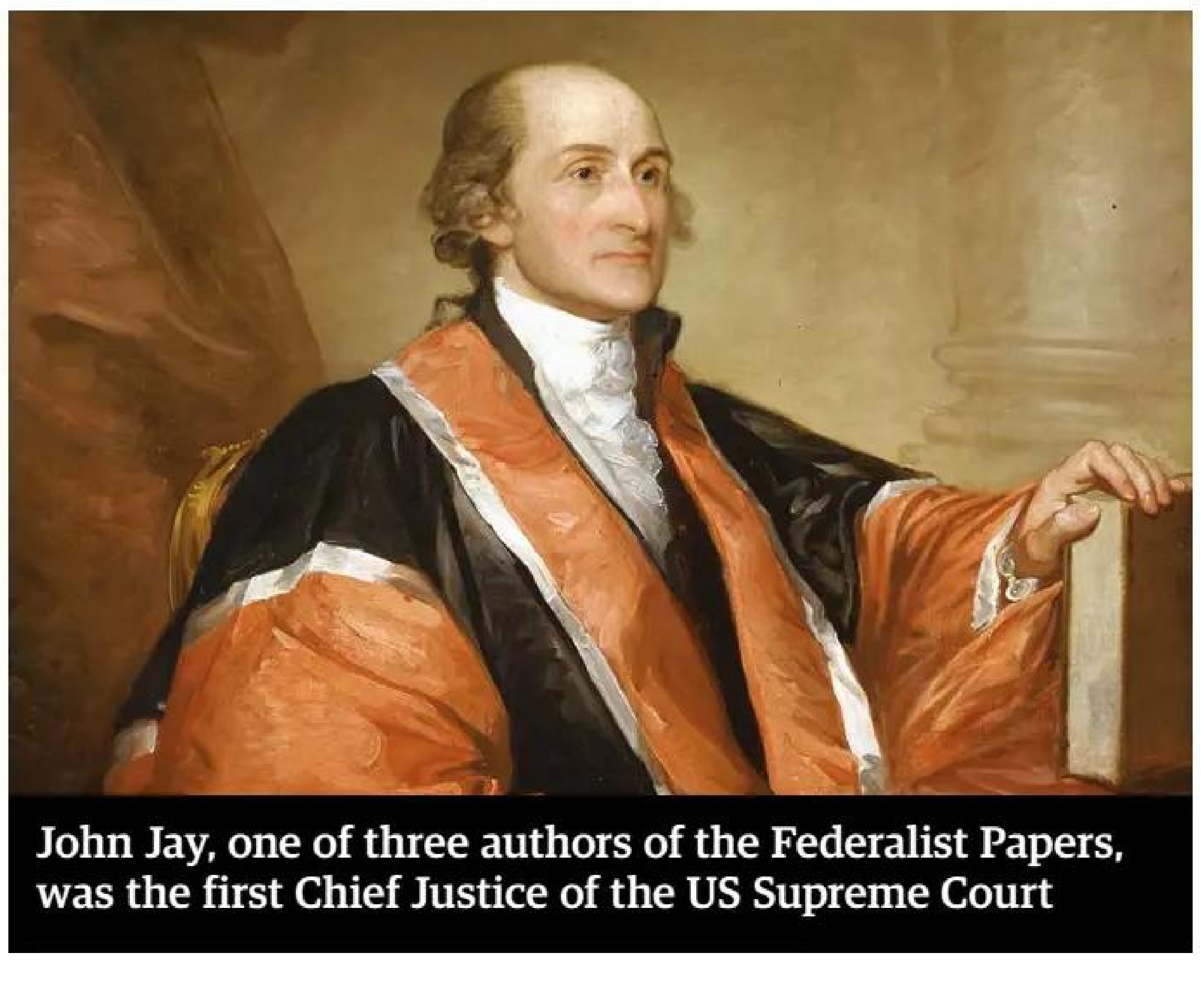
In addition, the delegates established the office of president as the executive branch of government and specified that it would be occupied by one man rather than a committee. They established a judicial branch of government as well. Each branch eventually achieved the



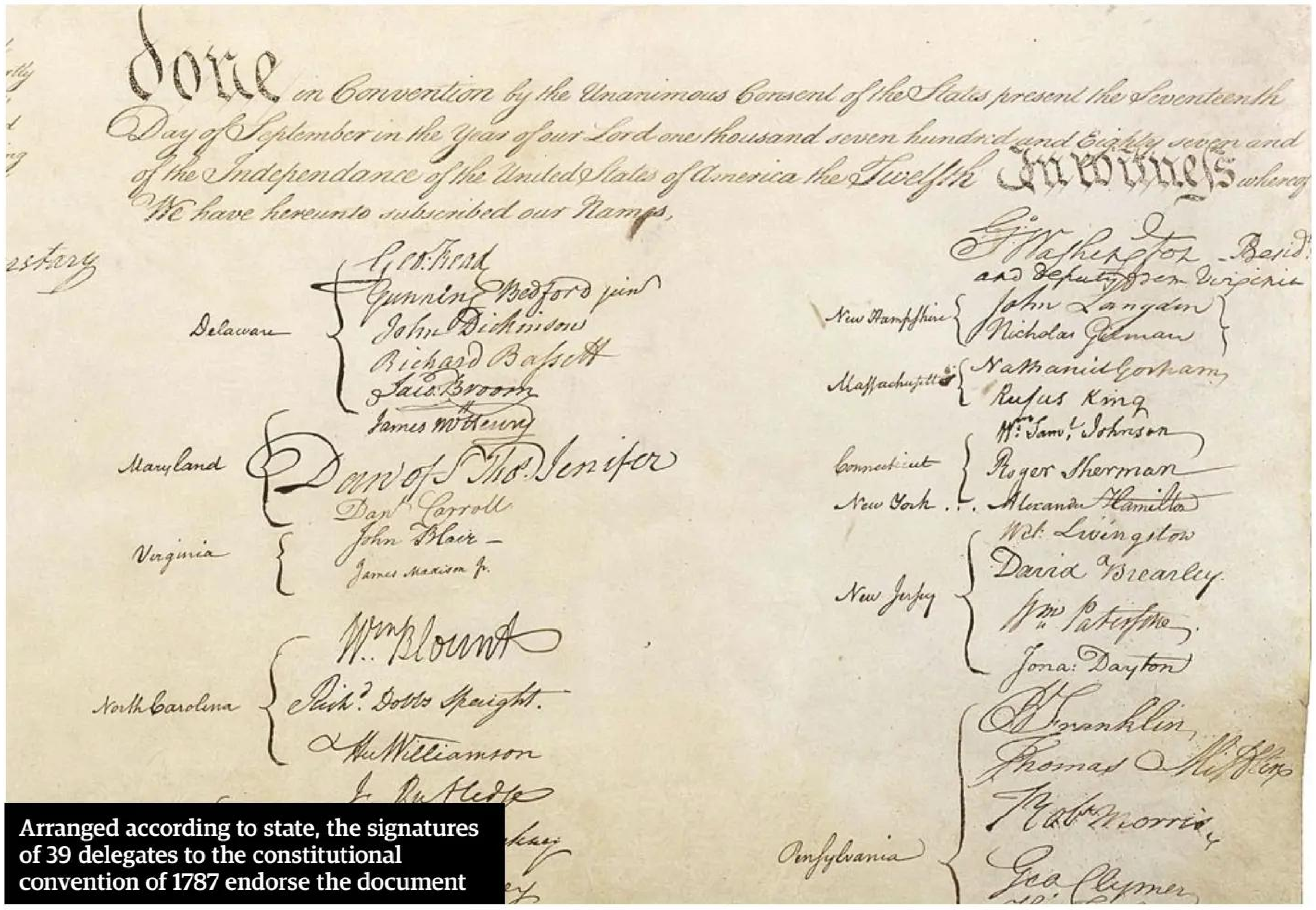
The words ‘We the People...’ open the preamble to the Constitution. The original document resides in the US National Archives



James Madison, the ‘Father of the Constitution,’ was also a principal author of the Federalist Papers



John Jay, one of three authors of the Federalist Papers, was the first Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court



done in Convention by the Unanimous Consent of the States present the Seventeenth Day of September in the Year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and Eighty seven and of the Independance of the United States of America the Twelfth In witness whereof We have hereunto subscribed our Names,

Go: Washington — Presidt. and deputy from Virginia

Delaware: Geo: Read, Gunning Bedford jun, John Dickinson, Richard Bassett, Jaco: Broom

Maryland: James McHenry, Dan of St Thos. Jenifer, Danl Carroll

Virginia: John Blair —, James Madison Jr.

North Carolina: Wm Blount, Richd. Dobbs Spaight, Hu Williamson

New Hampshire: John Langdon, Nicholas Gilman

Massachusetts: Nathaniel Gorham, Rufus King

Connecticut: Wm. Saml. Johnson, Roger Sherman

New York: Alexander Hamilton

New Jersey: Wil: Livingston, David Brearley, Wm. Paterson, Jona: Dayton

Pensylvania: B Franklin, Thomas Mifflin, Robt Morris, Geo. Clymer

Arranged according to state, the signatures of 39 delegates to the constitutional convention of 1787 endorse the document

standing required to provide a system of "checks and balances" so that no single branch might dominate the others. This system survives today. While other issues were left unresolved, there were discussions regarding the institution of slavery, trade, foreign relations and other important topics. Finally, the Constitution's opening phrase, "We the people…" was intended to acknowledge the source of the government's authority.

Ultimately, 55 delegates attended the constitutional convention at various times, and 39 signed the document. On 21 June 1788, the Constitution was ratified and became the law of the land. Still there were those who were wary of its implications. Virginian Patrick Henry, whose pamphlet Common Sense and impassioned "Give me liberty, or give me death!" speech had stoked the revolutionary flame, was solidly against the proposal, noting that he "smelled a rat!"

At a critical moment when the Constitution appeared destined for defeat, Madison prevailed on the divided Virginia delegation, particularly Edmund Randolph, to drop their anti-Federalist objections and support ratification. He assured other doubters that in exchange for their 'yea' votes he would sponsor the drafting and adoption of a 'bill of rights' intended to limit the powers of the central government.

Opponents of the Constitution argued forcefully that it did little to protect the rights of the individual. While the Federalists were generally convinced that it went far enough, Jefferson and others weren't convinced. The ratification of the Constitution without a bill of rights was incomplete. He reasoned, "A bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on Earth."

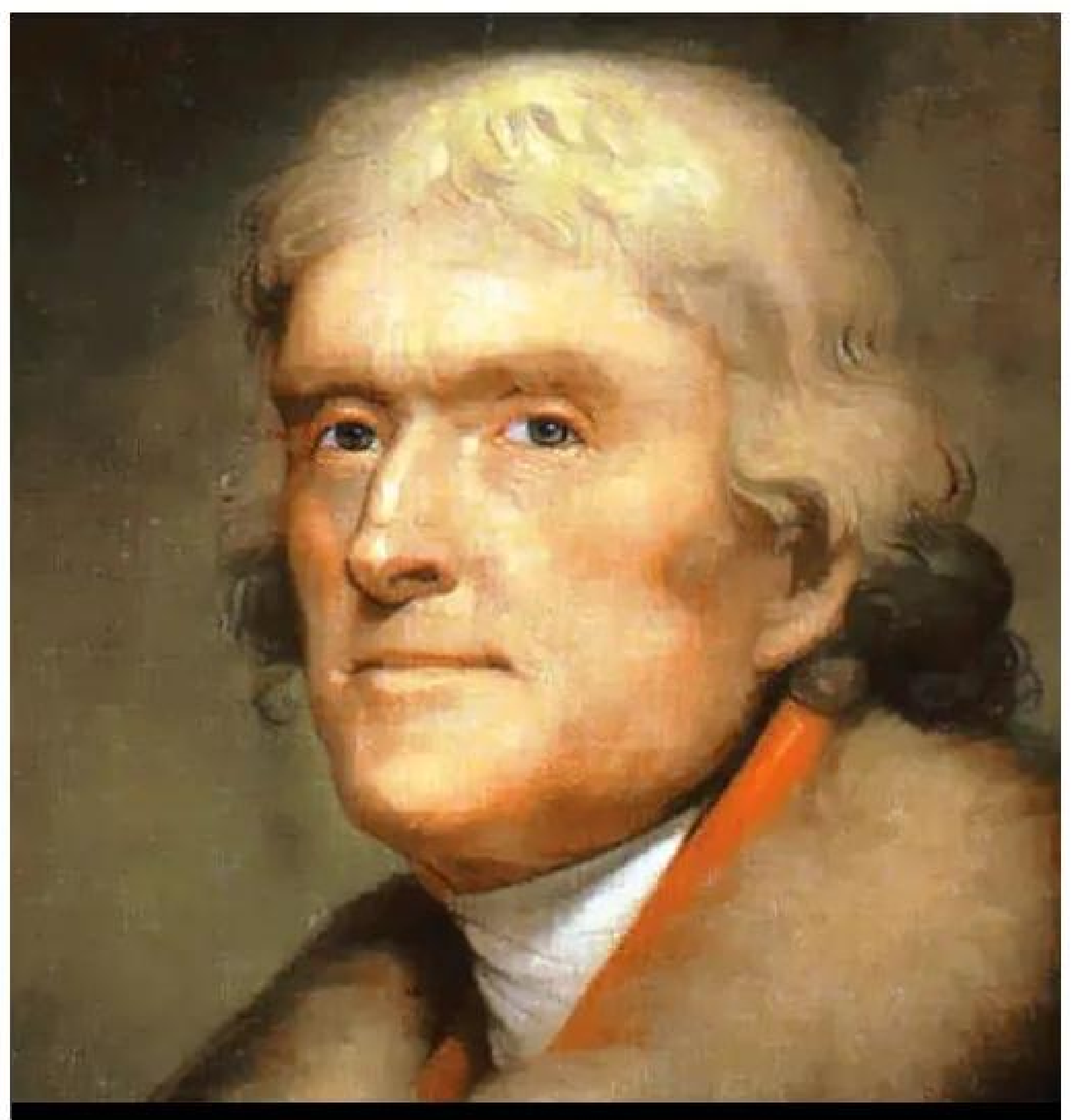
Although he personally considered the drafting of the Bill of Rights a "nauseous project," Madison came to realise that it had to be accomplished. The Constitution specified that the process of amendment required approval of three-quarters of the state legislatures.

There were modifications; some measures were dropped. Twelve of an original 17 proposed amendments survived the House and Senate and went to the state legislatures. Ten of these were ratified swiftly, and on 15 December 1791, the Virginia legislature was the last to approve the Bill of Rights.

The ten amendments of the Bill of Rights entrenched basic individual liberties in the theory and practice of the United States government. The first amendment, for example, protected freedom of religion and freedom of speech, the third harkened back to the despised Quartering Act of 1765 and prohibited the billeting of soldiers in private homes during peacetime without the owner's consent. The fourth amendment barred unlawful search and seizure.

Despite their differences, the Founding Fathers had provided the American people with a remarkable document intended to preserve, protect and defend liberty. The amendment process, in itself, alludes to the fact that they realised the Constitution was not perfect and that changing times might require its alteration. It was, however, the basis for a noble experiment in government – the likes of which had not been seen on Earth since Ancient Greece. Still, stern tests lay ahead.

> Comprising the first ten ratified amendments, the Bill of Rights safeguarded basic individual liberties



Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence, was a leader of the Democratic-Republicans

The two-party system

The two-party system that characterises American politics was born of sectionalism and differing ideological visions

The Founding Fathers initially criticised the idea of political parties. John Adams, for one, believed that party factions were "the greatest of political evils." Thomas Jefferson once said, "If I could not go to Heaven but with a party, I would not go there at all."

Still, within a few years of the ratification of the US Constitution, two major political parties, the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans, had emerged. The genesis of these parties lay in the Federalist assertion for a strong central government, which seemed to contradict the notion of states' and individual rights, which were the main tenets of the Democratic-Republicans.

Sectionalism played a role in their development as well. On 30 April 1789, George Washington was inaugurated as the first president. Subsequently, the Federalist Party began to take shape with the approval of its chief executive, Alexander Hamilton, the first Secretary of the Treasury. While Hamilton shaped early American fiscal processes and policy, his Federalist ideals were embraced primarily by the wealthy, landed merchants and businessmen of the Northeast. The Federalists also emphasised the growth of American industry.

Meanwhile, subsistence farmers, planters and those tied to agricultural livelihoods perceived the preponderance of 'nobly born and wealthy' individuals in government as a threat to their prosperity. Many also decried the new government's neutrality during the French Revolution. These somewhat disaffected citizens found champions for their cause in Jefferson and, somewhat surprisingly, Madison, whose views on states' rights moderated later in his life.

Unintentionally, the two-party system had evolved from differing political and social points of view. US political parties have continued to rise, fall away and revive.

Wikimedia Commons

INSIDE THE US CAPITOL

Explore the building that is a symbol of the American people

Written by Tim Hopkinson-Ball

The meeting place of the United States legislature, the Capitol is one of America's most recognised buildings. Construction began on 18 September 1793 when George Washington laid the cornerstone. Building was swift and, in November 1800, the US Congress met in the first completed portion: the north wing. By the 1850s, major extensions to the north and south ends of the Capitol were authorised because of America's westward expansion and the resultant growth of Congress. In 1855, the old dome was considered too small and so the iconic dome which tops the building today was designed and installed, drawing inspiration from St Paul's Cathedral in London and St Peter's Basilica in Rome.

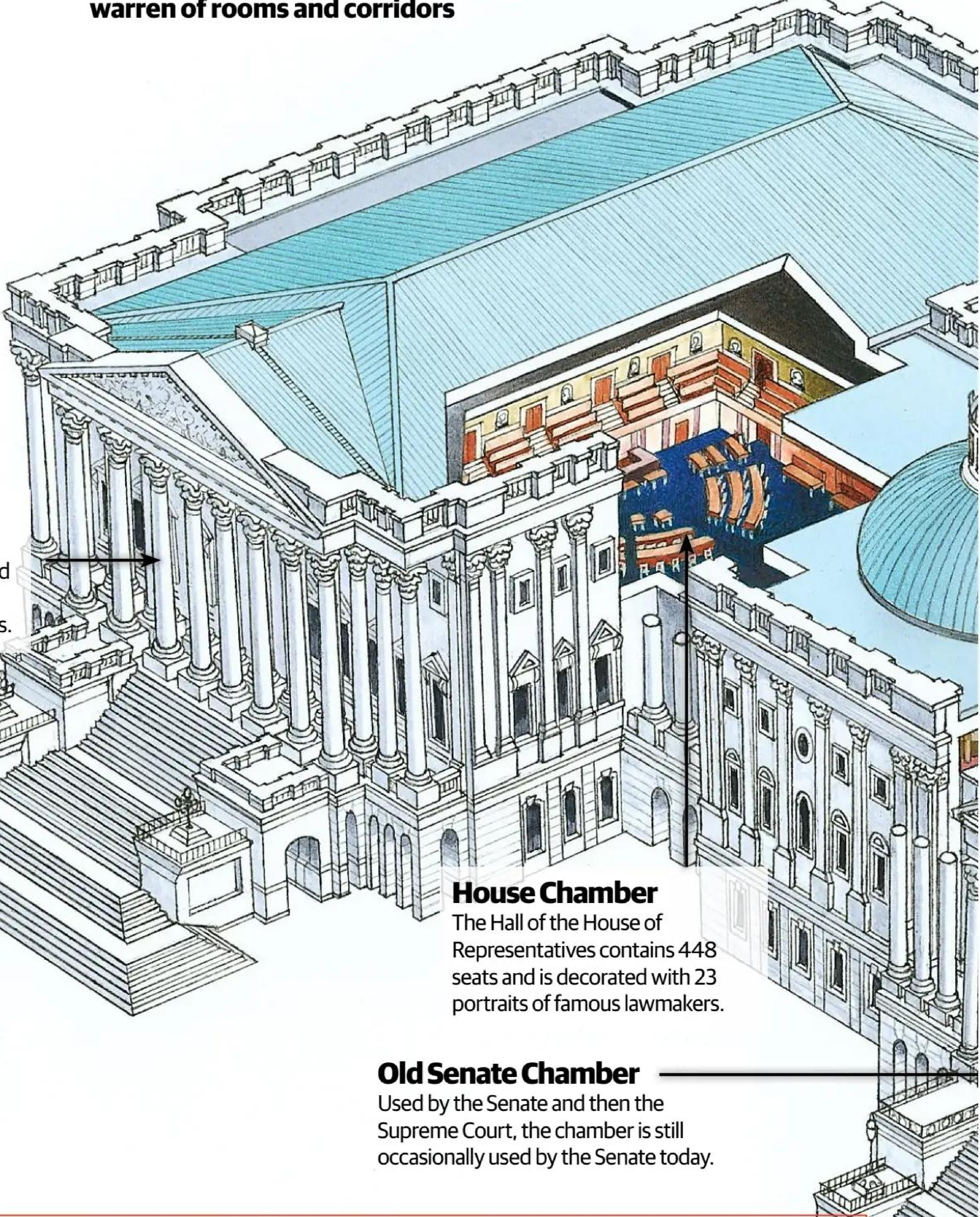
From its conception to completion, a number of materials have been used in the Capitol's construction. Built in the neoclassical style, the Capitol was first made of brick and sandstone. Only later did it take on its gleaming white appearance - the whole of the exterior and much of the interior being faced with white marble. The dome it's crowned with, however, is supported by cast iron and most of the more recent building projects have been constructed from more reasonable reinforced concrete.

The Visitor Center, which opened in 2008, is the most recent and possibly final addition to the US Capitol building. Covering an area of nearly 53,885 square metres (580,000 square feet), the Visitor Center is the largest building project in the Capitol's more than two-century history and is approximately three-quarters the size of the Capitol itself.

Due to its size, the entire facility was built underground so as not to detract from the appearance of the original building and the grounds designed by Frederick Law Olmsted in 1874. As well as a tourist attraction visited by millions every year, the US Capitol - like the Palace of Westminster in London - is a working office building and the centre of the world's largest democratic government.

Behind the façade

Although well ordered on the outside, the Capitol's interior is a bewildering warren of rooms and corridors



Hall of Columns
This 30.5m (100ft)-long hallway is lined with 28 fluted columns. It contains ten statues of notable Americans.

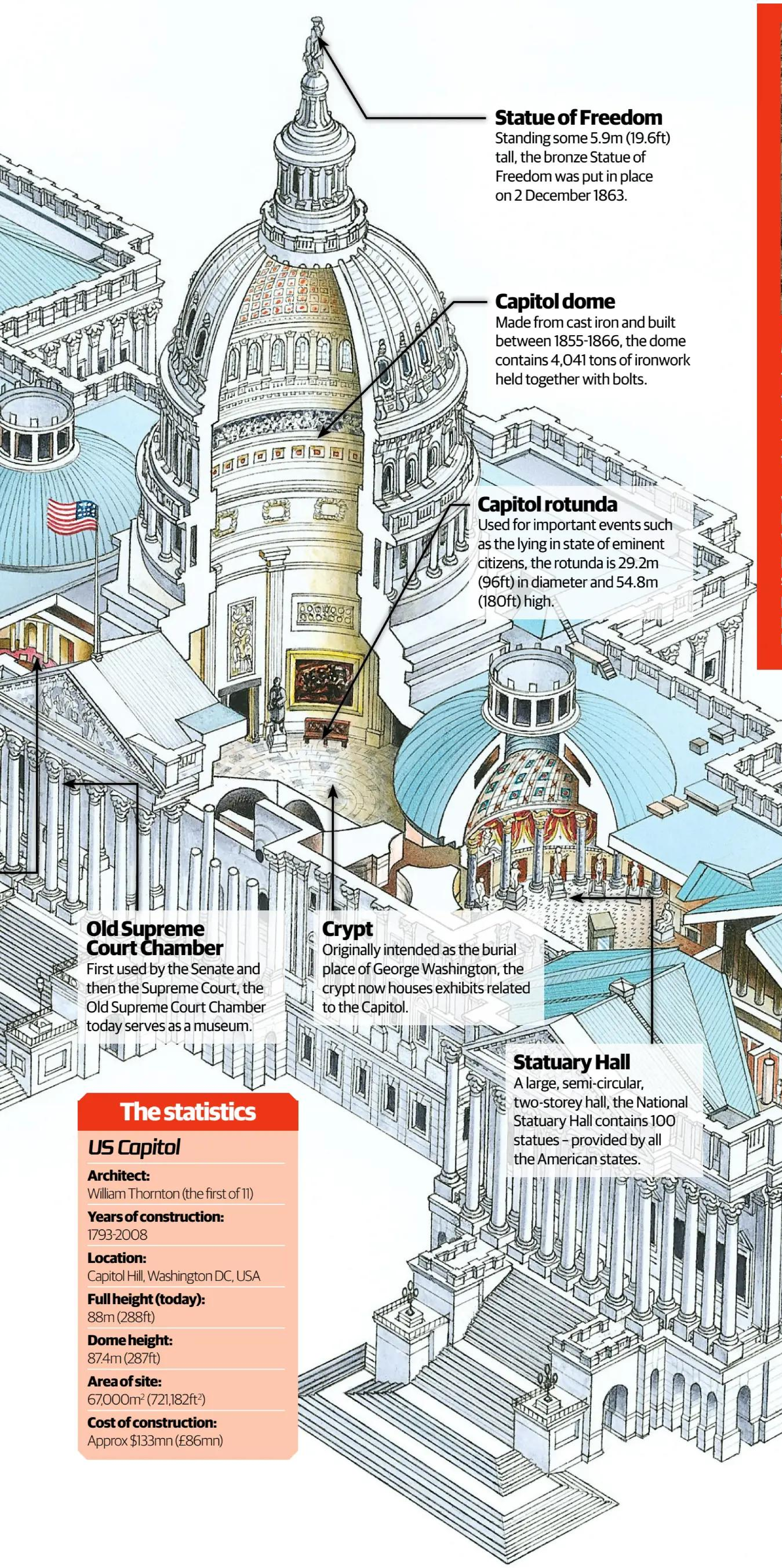
House Chamber
The Hall of the House of Representatives contains 448 seats and is decorated with 23 portraits of famous lawmakers.

Old Senate Chamber
Used by the Senate and then the Supreme Court, the chamber is still occasionally used by the Senate today.

THE CAPITOL AND URBAN LEGEND

Not surprisingly, the US Capitol building has become the focus of urban legend and a source of creative inspiration for writers, conspiracy theorists and film directors alike. Not only has it been claimed that the number of columns and steps in various locations in the Capitol have symbolic meanings, but it is believed by some that the building conceals hidden passages and chambers. It is also widely thought that the Capitol served as a prison during the American Civil War, although this is not the case.

The Capitol has frequently appeared in works of fiction too. For example, in Dan Brown's book *The Lost Symbol*, the idea that the Capitol's crypt originally featured an eternal flame tended by its own 'keeper' is introduced - a delightful conceit which many now cite as historical fact. It's also said to be the American landmark which has been most frequently blown up in Hollywood films, including 2013 movie *White House Down*.



Statue of Freedom
Standing some 5.9m (19.6ft) tall, the bronze Statue of Freedom was put in place on 2 December 1863.

Capitol dome
Made from cast iron and built between 1855-1866, the dome contains 4,041 tons of ironwork held together with bolts.

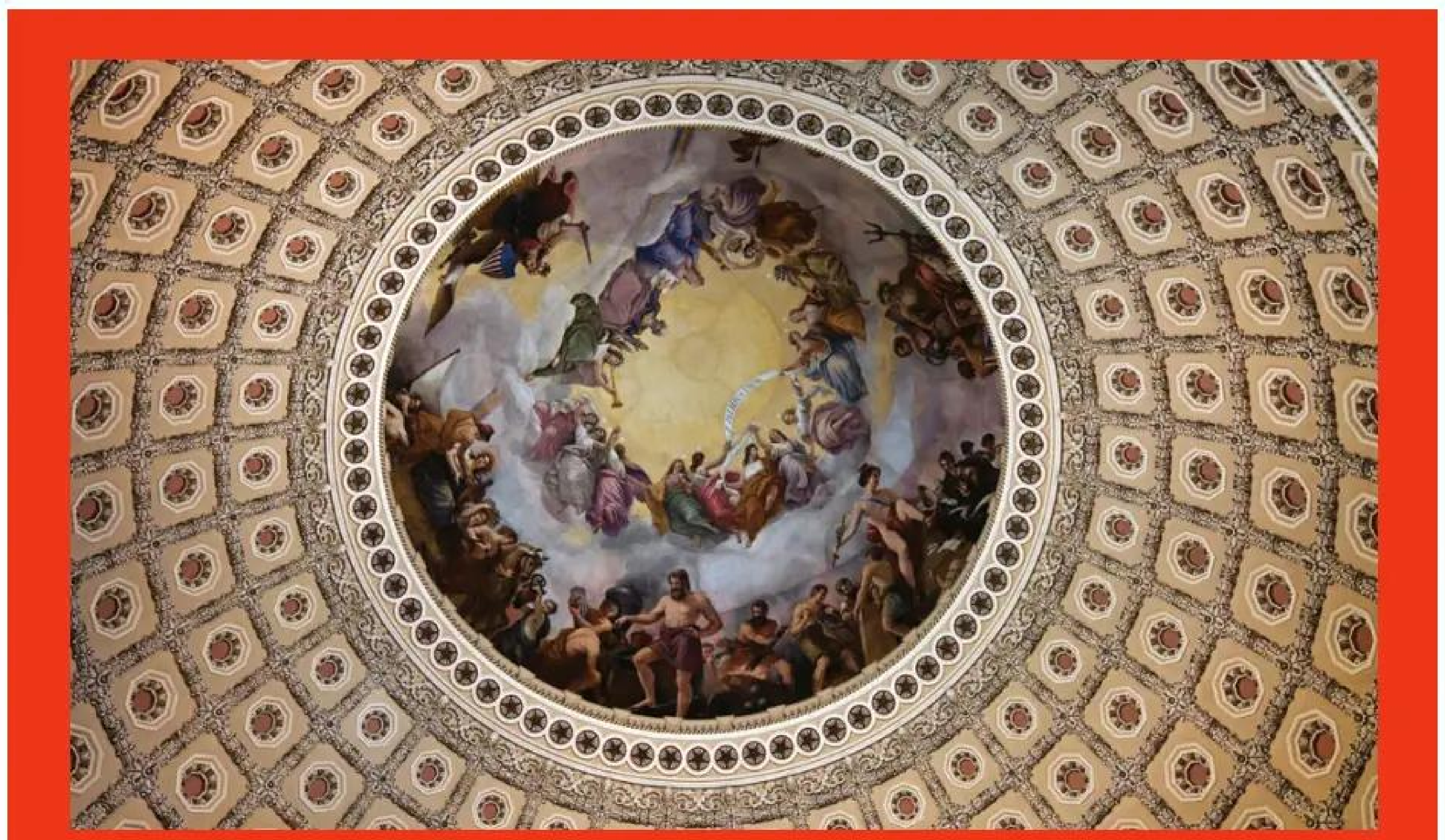
Capitol rotunda
Used for important events such as the lying in state of eminent citizens, the rotunda is 29.2m (96ft) in diameter and 54.8m (180ft) high.

Old Supreme Court Chamber
First used by the Senate and then the Supreme Court, the Old Supreme Court Chamber today serves as a museum.

Crypt
Originally intended as the burial place of George Washington, the crypt now houses exhibits related to the Capitol.

Statuary Hall
A large, semi-circular, two-storey hall, the National Statuary Hall contains 100 statues – provided by all the American states.

Senate Chamber
Opened in 1859, this chamber is adorned with white marble busts of former presidents of the Senate (vice-presidents of the United States).



A FOCUS ON THE FRESCOES

The Capitol contains a number of frescoes, the most famous of which – *The Apotheosis Of Washington* – covers some 433m^2 (4,664ft^2) on the main dome's ceiling.

Fresco is an ancient art form in which paint is applied to freshly laid lime plaster on a wall or ceiling. Water is used as the vehicle for the pigment which is absorbed into the surface as the plaster sets. The painting thus becomes an integral part of the surface to which it has been applied. Fresco is often used for large-scale artistic compositions in buildings as small sections of plaster can be applied and painted at a time, enabling the artist to slowly build up the composition. This means that mistakes or changes can be easily implemented too.

Although fresco is very durable, grime accumulates on its surface over time and the plaster can darken. Modern cleaning techniques, however, can rectify this problem.

The statistics

US Capitol

Architect:	William Thornton (the first of 11)
Years of construction:	1793-2008
Location:	Capitol Hill, Washington DC, USA
Full height (today):	88m (288ft)
Dome height:	87.4m (287ft)
Area of site:	67,000m^2 (721,182ft^2)
Cost of construction:	Approx $133mn (£86mn)

DK Images, Thinkstock, Architect of the Capitol

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Knowledge is power: How the dissemination of ideas from the Enlightenment led to the overthrow of a monarchy and the birth of a republic

Written by Melanie Clegg

While the intellectuals of Europe excitedly shared the new ideas of the Enlightenment with each other, it was only a matter of time before their theories began to filter down to the rest of society. Literacy rose sharply throughout the 18th century, especially among women and the working classes. Whereas in the past most households would have owned no other reading material but a well-thumbed Bible, now they began to buy pamphlets and books.

As men and women of all classes devoured the latest publications, attended lectures and came together to discuss the new and exciting ideas of scientists and philosophers, it was only natural that these activities would give rise to a feeling of dissatisfaction with the status quo and, eventually, outright rebellion. It was hardly surprising, considering their vested interest in keeping the lower orders in their place, that the State and Church reacted angrily to the writings of prominent French philosophers, all of whom were highly critical of the establishment and were mostly atheists or at least highly doubtful about the existence of God.

When Diderot's ground-breaking *Encyclopédie* was published in France between 1751 and 1772, it was loved by its readers but greeted with outrage by the authorities. Its contributors were denounced as blasphemous and seditious. Voltaire, in particular, attracted a great deal of attention from the authorities thanks to his anti-establishment views and open contempt for both the monarchy and Roman Catholic Church. He was also keen to make his work available to people of every class, even deliberately having his *Dictionnaire Philosophique* printed in a smaller size so that it could be carried about in pockets.

His contemporary Jean-Jacques Rousseau was equally keen to engage with readers and, like Voltaire, employed several different mediums such as novels, books and even his own memoirs to get his ideas across. In the past, philosophers had considered themselves to be the intellectual superiors of the masses and had taken little interest in anyone outside their own narrow sphere. Now they wanted to see their ideas spread as widely as possible and encourage critical thinking and debate, which was naturally something that the Church and establishment were keen to suppress.

Both Voltaire and Rousseau would be persecuted and forced to live outside France for several years, but despite the best efforts of the State and Church, it proved impossible to suppress their work at home. They were both revered as champions of liberty and freedom, with Rousseau's opening lines to his *Encyclopédie* article about political economics – "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains" – having an especially profound and stirring effect on readers all across France in the years leading up to 1789.

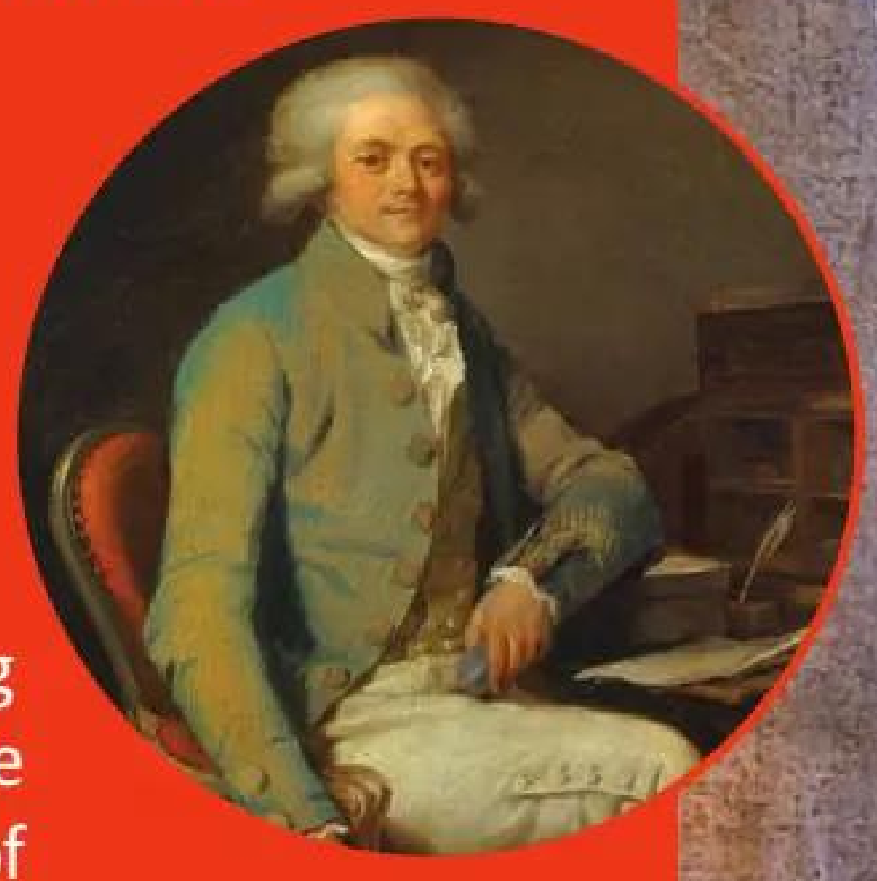
One of the greatest influences on Rousseau and Voltaire was the English philosopher John Locke, who died in 1704 and was considered by many to be the 'father of liberalism'. Of particular interest to the French philosophers, who were so critical of the absolutism of the Bourbon regime, was Locke's belief in republicanism – namely that a government should be elected by the people and that its primary goal should not to control or oppress the populace, but

The constitutional monarchy was adopted at the start of the Revolution but violently fell apart on 10 August 1792 when the Tuileries Palace was taken by the mob and the royal family imprisoned

Enlightened revolutionaries

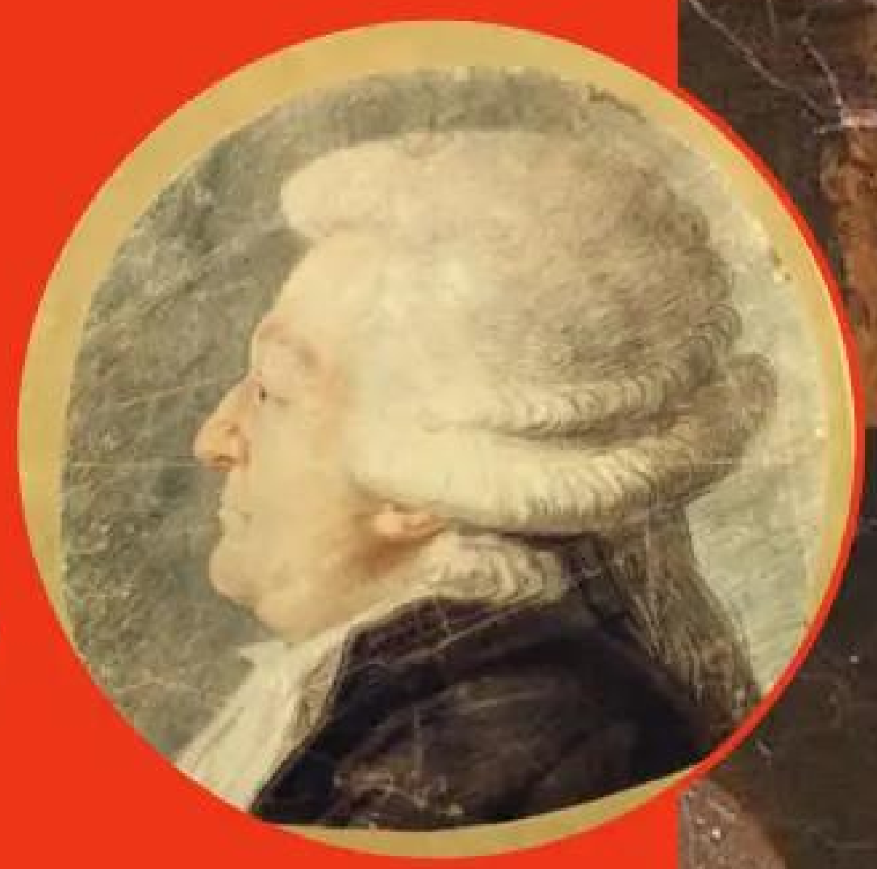
The one thing that all the main figures of the French Revolution had in common was a mutual reverence and respect for the ideas espoused by the Enlightenment

ROBESPIERRE



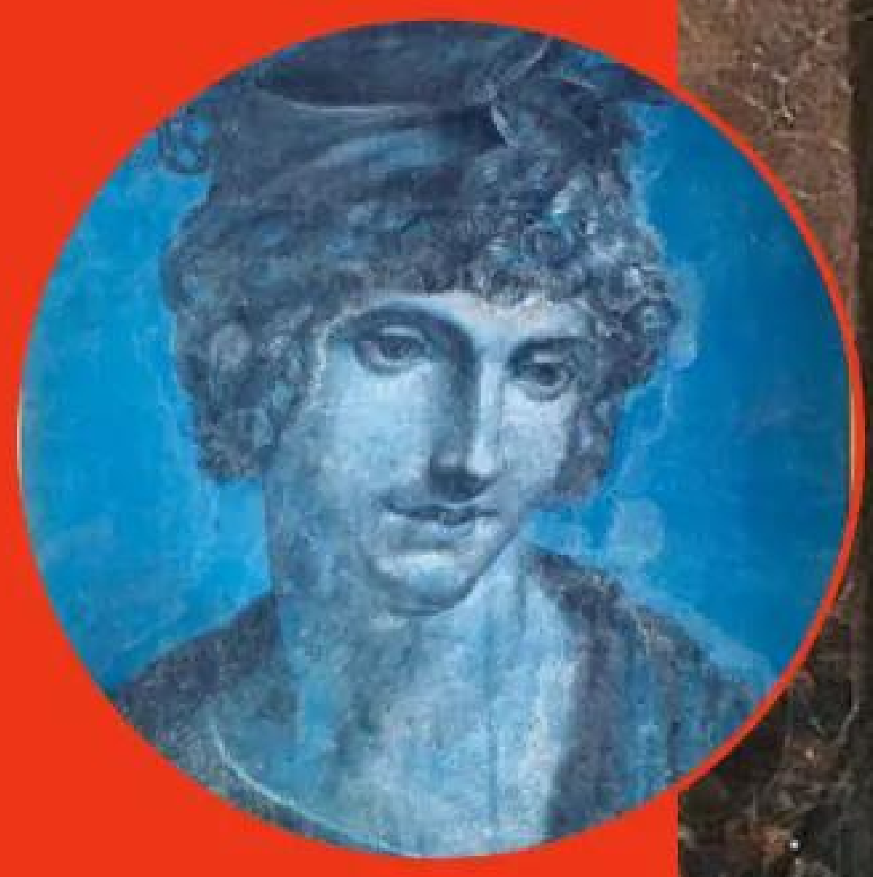
Maximilian Robespierre was a passionate devotee of the Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, sharing his deist beliefs and particularly espousing his idea that every man's ultimate goal should be to attain a state of perfect virtue and moral integrity.

MIRABEAU



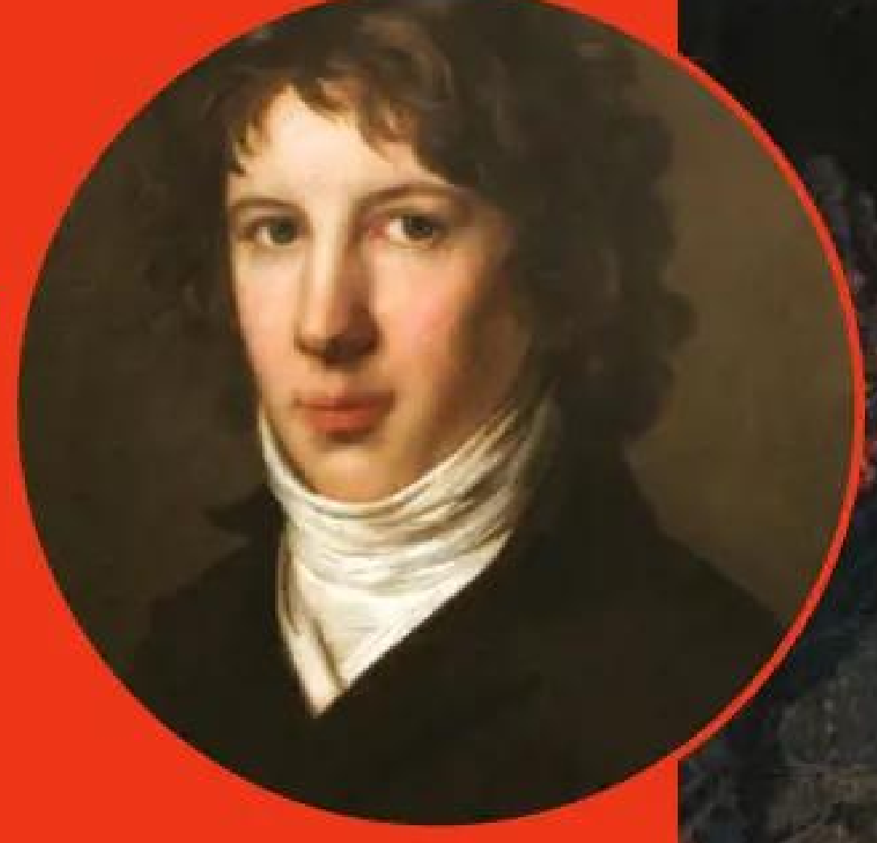
Honoré Riqueti, Comte de Mirabeau, was one of several liberal-minded aristocrats who rose to prominence in the early years of the revolution. A great admirer of Montesquieu, he strongly advocated for the creation of a constitutional monarchy in France.

OLYMPE DE GOUGES



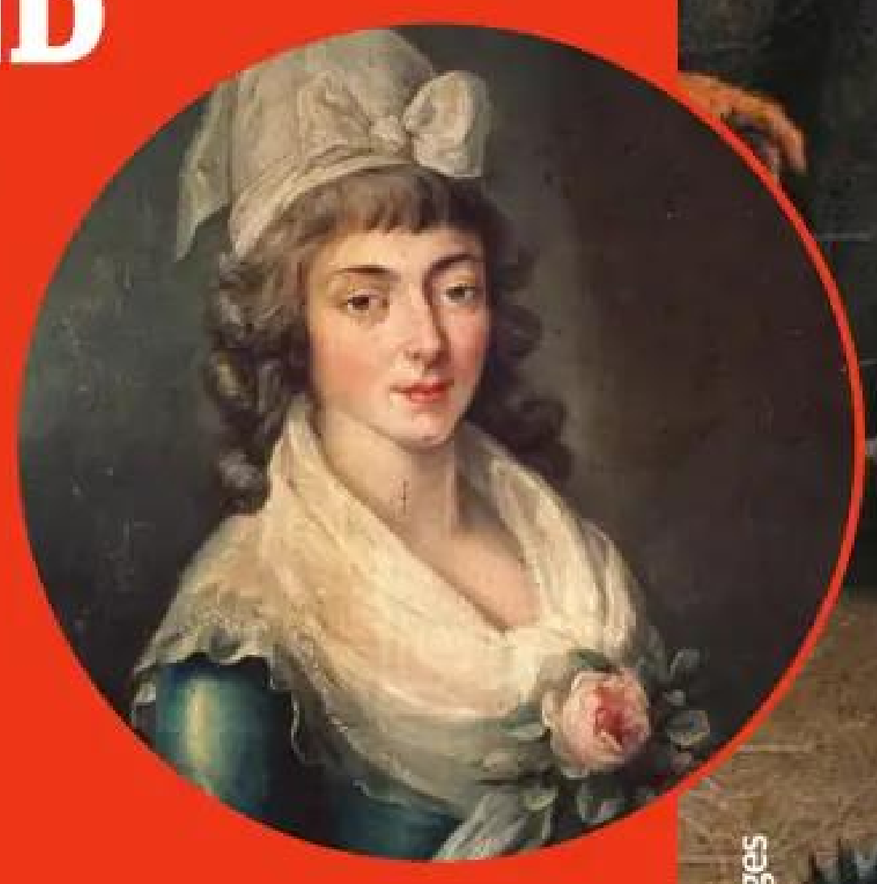
Olympe de Gouges was a playwright, intellectual, human rights advocate and early feminist whose *Declaration of the Rights of Women* was published in 1791. After openly criticising Robespierre and his faction, she was arrested and guillotined in 1793.

SAINT-JUST



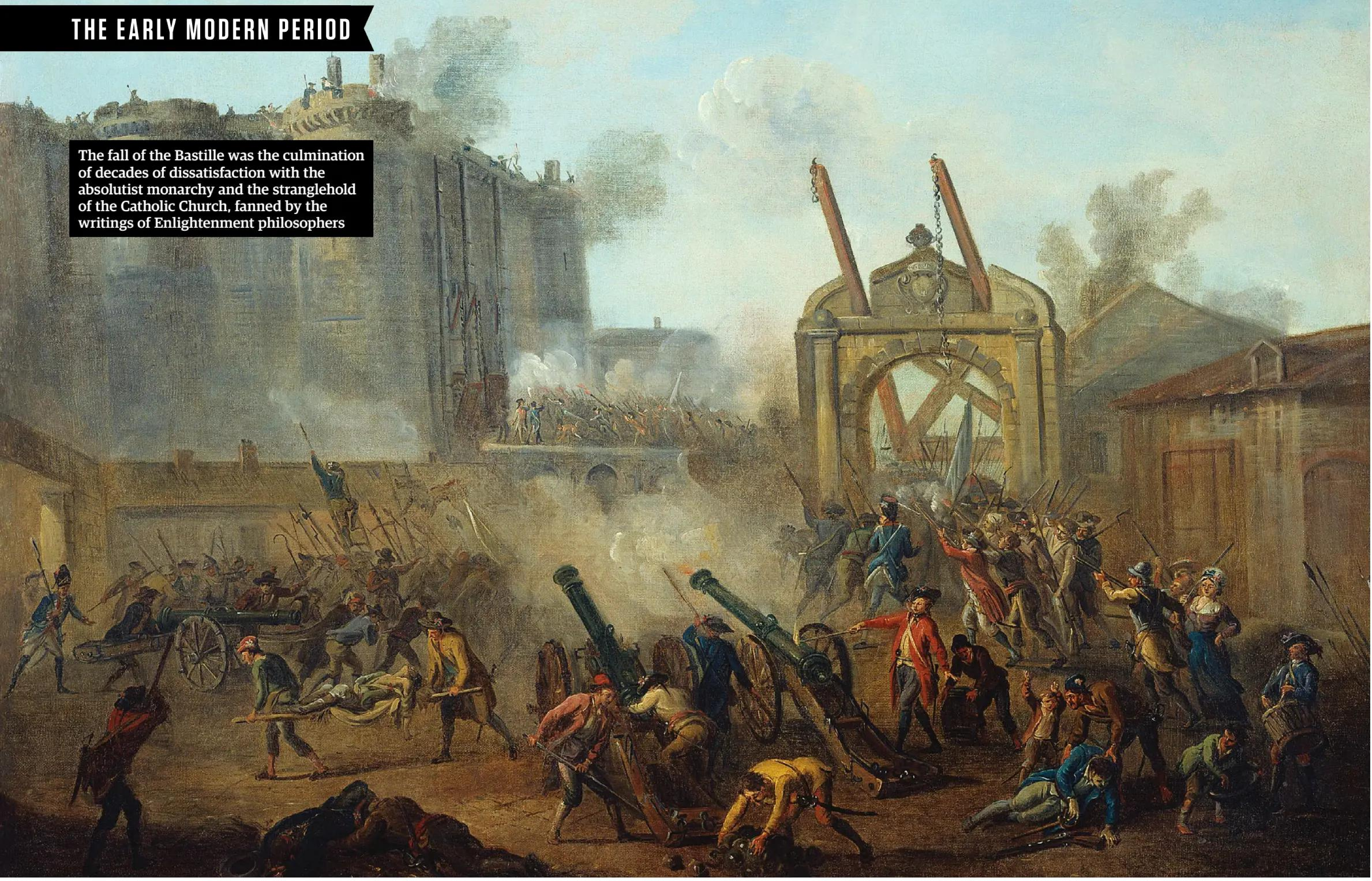
Louis Antoine de Saint-Just was heavily influenced by Voltaire, whose style he aped, along with that of his favourite ancient Roman authors, while writing his lengthy epic poem *Organt*, which savagely denounced the corruption of the Church and the monarchy.

MANON ROLAND



Jeanne Manon Roland was one of the most prominent female intellectuals and salonnières of revolutionary Paris. Although she herself did not become a politician, she was still one of the most influential members of the Girondin party.

Getty Images



The fall of the Bastille was the culmination of decades of dissatisfaction with the absolutist monarchy and the stranglehold of the Catholic Church, fanned by the writings of Enlightenment philosophers

instead foster a sense of moral responsibility in its citizens while improving their lives and encouraging them to make the best of themselves. He also believed that no monarch should ever be entrusted with absolute power because of an accident of birth; instead there should be a system of constitutional monarchy and a social contract wherein the sovereign works alongside the government.

The French monarchy, based at Versailles, was cut off from the will and desires of the people and apparently devoted itself to the enrichment of an aristocratic elite. King Frederick the Great of Prussia, who was a friend and patron of both Voltaire and Rousseau, was an example of a ruler who used his power to benefit his people, and was often held up by French intellectuals as an example of how a monarch should be. Meanwhile, the French kings were regarded as ignorant, selfish and corrupt.

Locke's political theories were echoed and amplified for a French audience by the venerable philosopher Charles-Louis Montesquieu, who also believed that the best system of government was a liberal constitutional monarchy in which the sovereign had extremely limited powers. In his 1753 book *L'Esprit des Lois*, regarded by many to be his masterpiece, he went even further by suggesting that it was dangerous for one single entity or person to have full control of the government, lest they become corrupted by power and become a despot. Instead, he believed the state should be split into different branches that would hold equal power and prevent others from taking complete charge.

In England, whose system was much admired by French intellectuals, the state was divided into three: the Crown, Parliament and the Law, all of which held the others accountable for their actions while at the same time working independently of one another. This seemed a much fairer system than the one in France, where all power devolved to the monarch and the Church and nobility had far more influence than was considered fair. It's notable that although the state was freely and often ferociously criticised and there

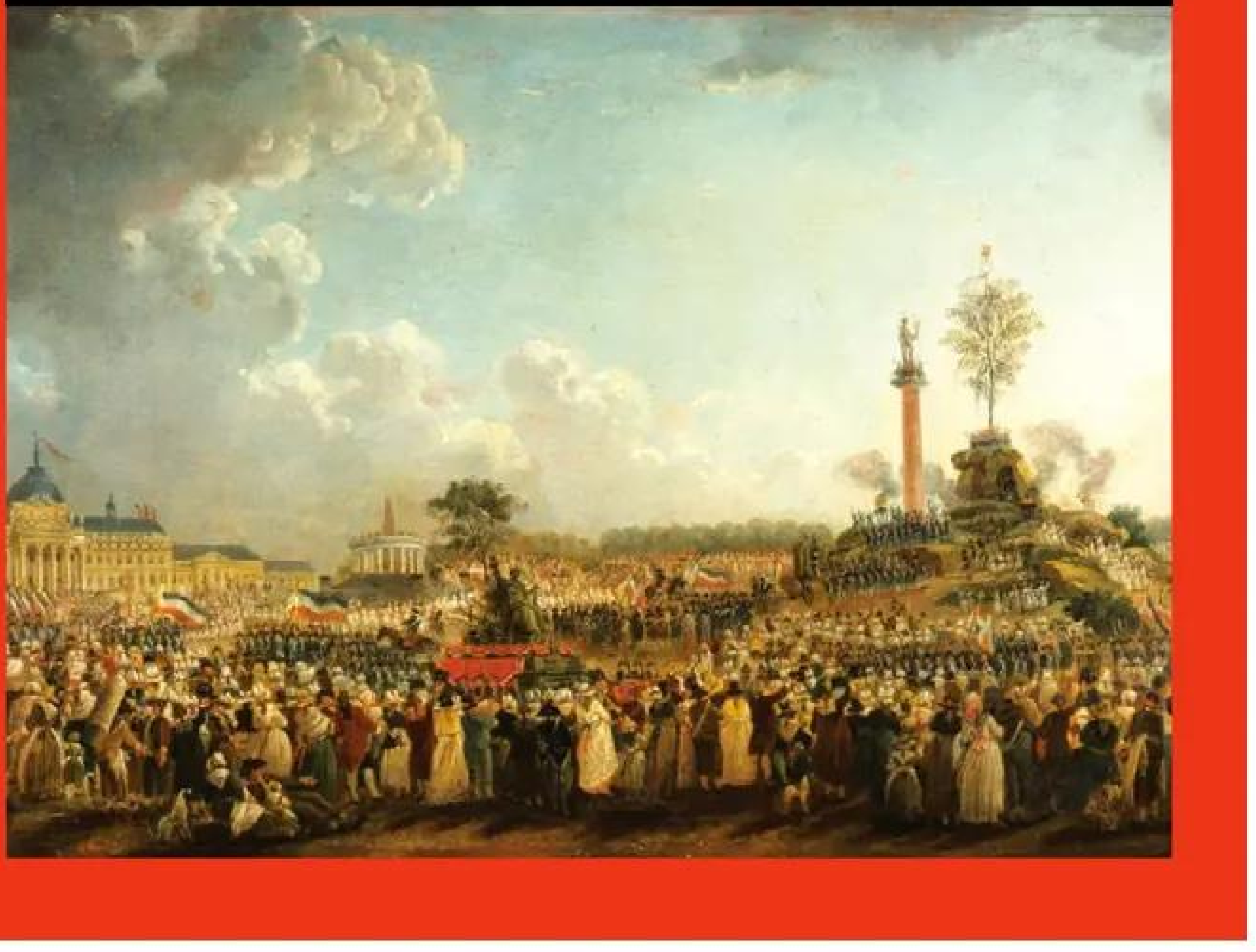
Cult of the Supreme Being

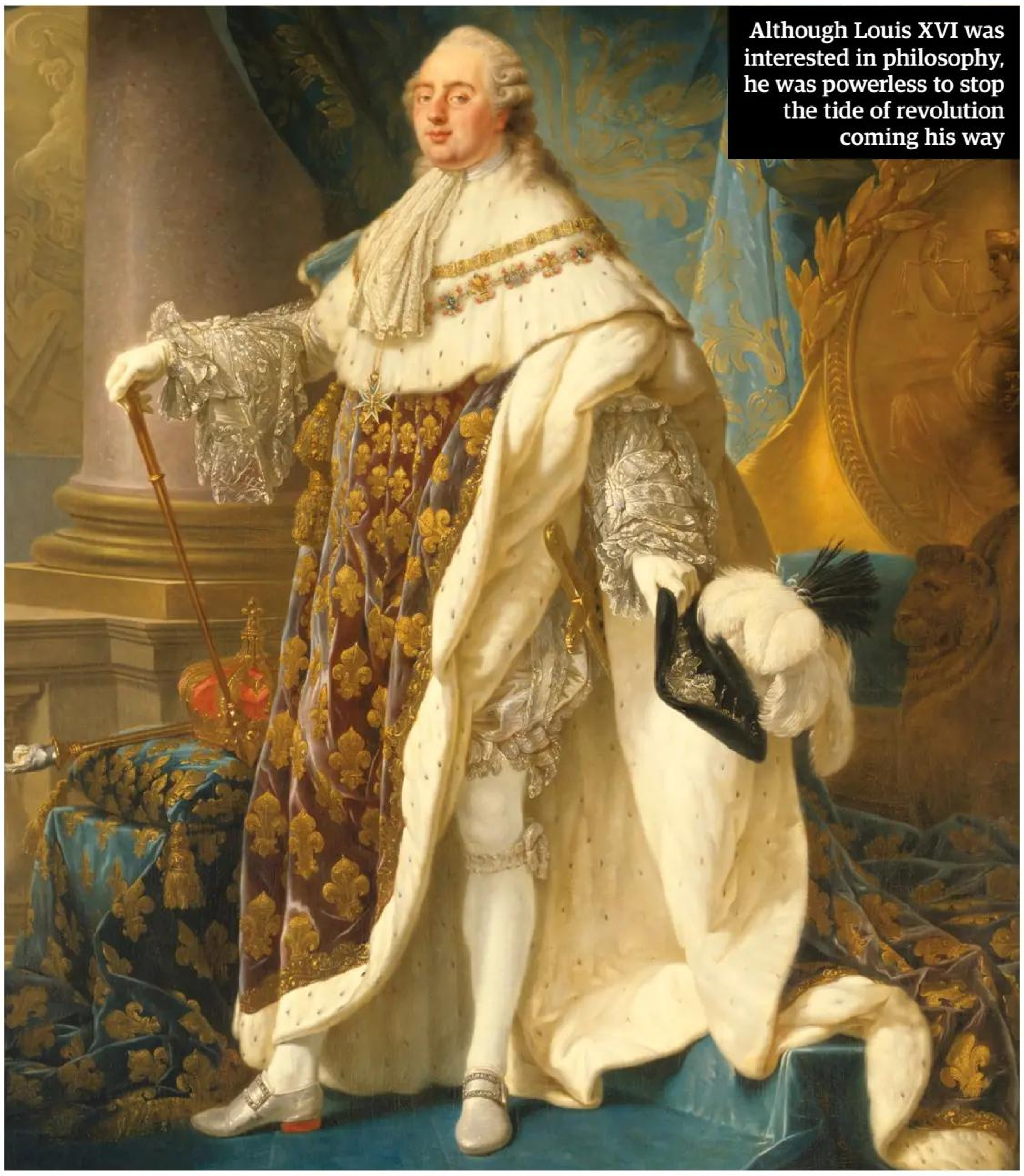
Once the French Revolutionaries had done away with the Catholic Church, they needed to invent something to replace it

By the time the French Revolution began in 1789, the Catholic Church was universally loathed throughout France, the hatred fanned by the highly critical writings of Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau. It was hardly surprising that the Church's influence would be quickly dismantled and then done away with thanks to the legislations of the successive revolutionary governments, eventually resulting in the complete dechristianisation of France.

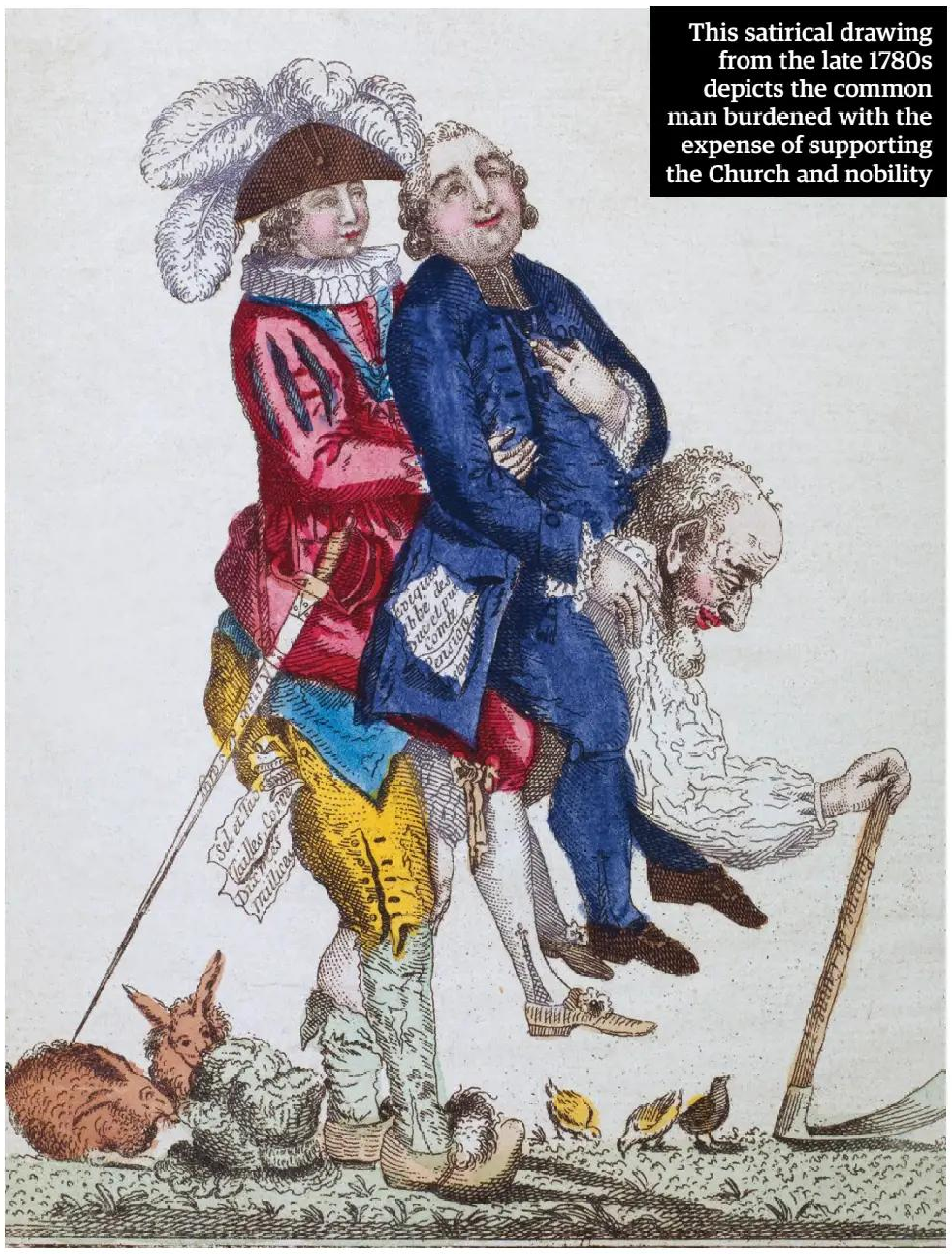
It was replaced by the Cult of Reason, which was a form of anthropocentric atheism, but this was quickly displaced by the deist ideals that had been most notably espoused by Voltaire. Chiefly conjured up by Robespierre, who very much took to heart Voltaire's words "If God did not exist, then it would be necessary to invent him", the resulting Cult of the Supreme Being was officially inaugurated as the state religion in May 1794 and celebrated in Paris with an ostentatious festival orchestrated by Robespierre and the artist David a month later. However, it failed to capture the public imagination and would be quietly dropped and forgotten after Robespierre's execution in July 1794.

Robespierre's Festival of the Supreme Being was held on the Champ de Mars in Paris in June 1794





Although Louis XVI was interested in philosophy, he was powerless to stop the tide of revolution coming his way



This satirical drawing from the late 1780s depicts the common man burdened with the expense of supporting the Church and nobility

"Locke's political theories were echoed and amplified for a French audience"

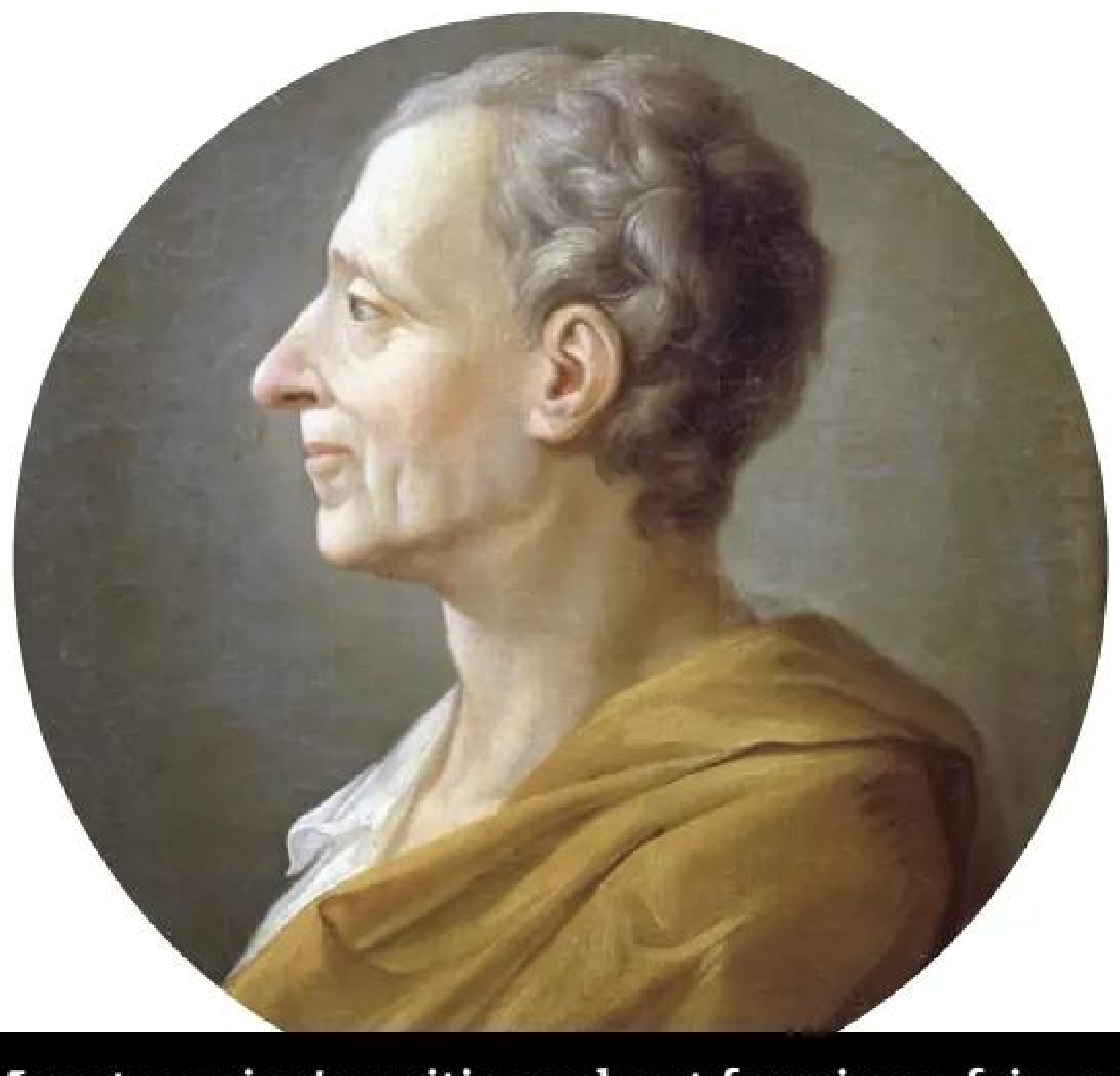
was much discussion about what form a fairer, more democratic system might take, there was still very little talk about whether or not it might be better to do away with the monarchy – this development would not occur for quite some time.

While philosophers were highly critical of the Bourbon kings they reserved most of their ire for the Catholic Church, which maintained a stranglehold upon the French people both financially and emotionally. As far as they were concerned, it was impossible for the people to achieve true freedom both of thought and person so long as the Church continued to exert its malign influence.

Despite their antipathy for the monarchy, philosophers believed that there was still a place for it within the restrictions imposed by a constitutional system. Many saw no such role for the Church, however, while others such as Montesquieu still believed that there was a place for it within a separation of powers, which would ultimately have restricted its influence and made it more answerable to the people. As far as writers such as Voltaire and Rousseau were concerned, the Catholic Church was at the very heart of the corrupt and unequal system that was destroying their beloved France and should be replaced by the deism that they espoused.

This would eventually happen during the Revolution when Robespierre, who renamed it the Cult of the Supreme Being, declared it to be the new state religion of France in 1794. The licentious priest, the promiscuous nun and the ineffectual buffoonish prelate would all become increasingly vicious and recognisable caricatures during the years leading up to the French Revolution, destroying the last lingering credibility of the Church as effectively as the libellous tracts denouncing the private behaviour of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI were in diminishing the final traces of respect for the monarchy.

When revolution finally came in 1789, it was initially an idealistic force that was driven by the writings of philosophers such as Diderot, Voltaire and Rousseau – men who had believed in the principles of freedom – while the political theories of Locke and Montesquieu lay the groundwork for a new and improved constitutional monarchy, albeit a short-lived one that was destined to completely collapse in the summer of 1792. The new upcoming politicians of the Revolution, men such as Robespierre, Danton and Saint-Just, were all highly educated, skilled orators and as passionately devoted to the concept of liberty for all men as their philosopher predecessors had been.



Monstesquieu's writings about forming a fair and liberal government inspired the early revolutionaries, although his principles were soon abandoned

Voltaire and Rousseau, both of who were especially revered by Robespierre and Saint-Just, were both dead long before 1789, but their influence lingered on. Both received the great official accolade of burial in the Panthéon church and all manner of public memorials. Robespierre in particular was devoted to the memory of Rousseau, whose belief in a common good, or rather a collectivist movement that encouraged individuals to work together for the good of the French people, lay at the heart of his own ideology. However, Rousseau, along with Voltaire and the other intellectuals whose ideas had such a profound influence on the young men and women of the French Revolution would no doubt have been appalled by the violent direction that it took.

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Democracy under threat
From 'fake news' to AI, what obstacles and challenges does democracy face?

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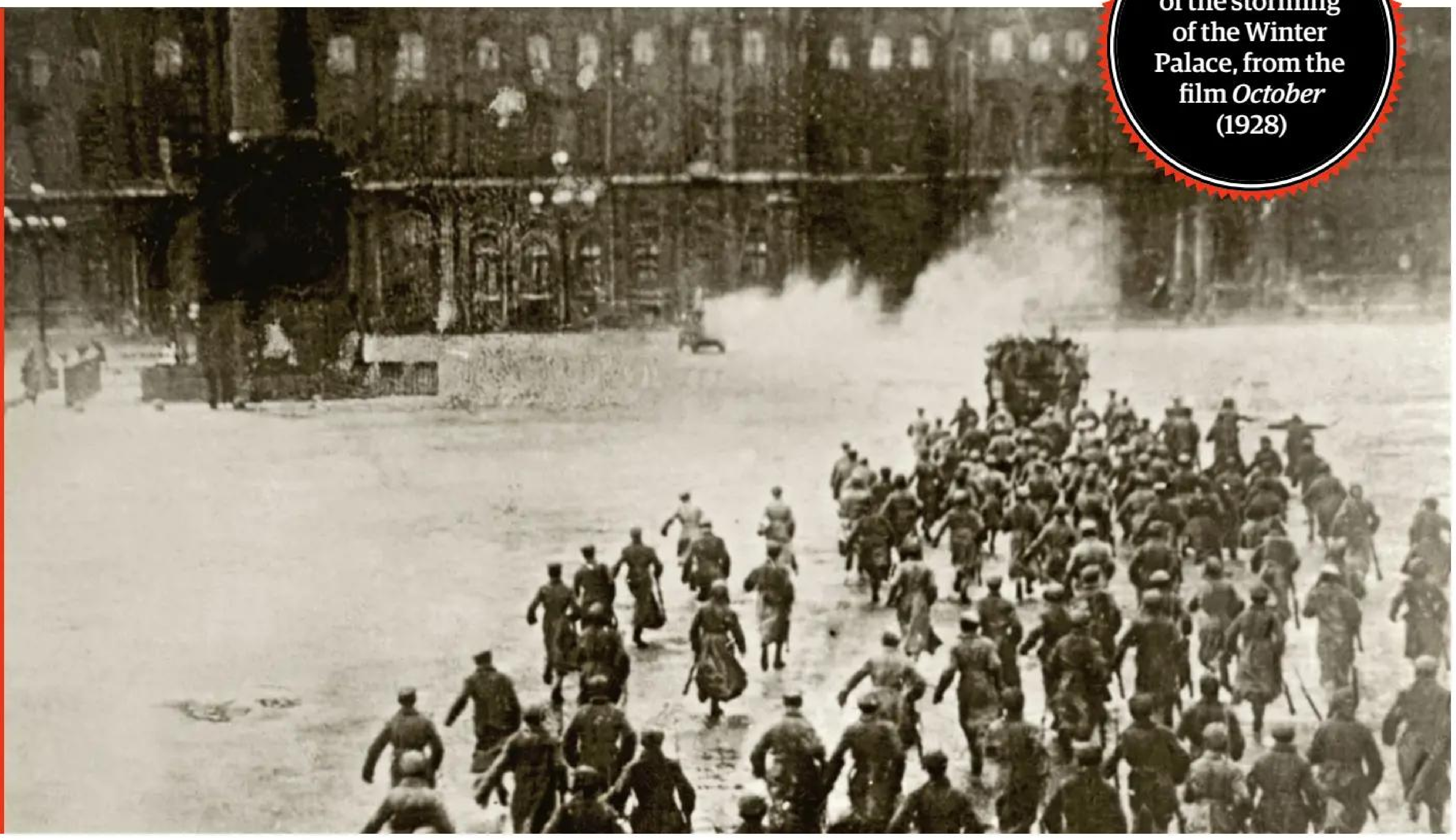
DEMOCRACY THROUGH HISTORY: MODERN MILESTONES

Written by Joel McIver

1917 THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

RUSSIA

Was the 1917 Russian Revolution a step forward or backward for democracy in that country? On the one hand, the Vladimir Lenin-led Bolsheviks empowered the huge Russian population by removing the whip-hand from the tsars and associated aristocratic and noble military classes, who were either executed or exiled. On the other hand, the decades of state-enforced communism that followed bore no resemblance to liberal government, especially once the Soviet Union spread beyond Russia's borders. The leadership of heads of state such as Joseph Stalin was both totalitarian and violent, and living conditions for many Russians were intolerable for years on end.



A recreation of the storming of the Winter Palace, from the film *October* (1928)

THE FIRST MODERN ELECTION?

1856

The then-British Empire's first democratic vote for a public representative takes place in Tasmania (a colony at the time), where a secret ballot is held on 7 February 1856, electing William Champ (right) as its first premier.

1917

VICTORY FOR THE SUFFRAGETTES

1918

After years of disruptive and sometimes fatal action by the suffragettes – led by activists such as Emmeline Pankhurst (left, pictured centre) – British women over 30 are finally given the vote in 1918. Their cause was assisted by the crucial work of women in munitions factories during World War I.

THE IMM
OF TH

1933-45

1954-68

FATAL PROTESTS IN EASTERN EUROPE

1956

Democracy takes a backward step in Hungary, where Soviet tanks crush protesters against the regime: more than 3,000 lives are lost and many thousands of people flee the country.

THE PRAGUE SPRING ENDS WITH VIOLENCE

1968

Planned political reforms are halted in the then-Czechoslovakia when Soviet forces attack and kill protesters (right). The country would remain under Moscow's control for another 21 years.

TURMOIL IN CHILE

1970-73

In 1970, Salvador Allende becomes Chile's first democratically elected Marxist president – but three years later he is overthrown in a military coup, the first action of General Augusto Pinochet, who embarks on a violent dictatorship.

1933-45 THE THIRD REICH

GERMANY, MAINLAND EUROPE, THE FAR EAST

"The Empire that will last a thousand years" – as its chief architect, Adolf Hitler, promised – only lasted for 12, but that was sufficient time for Hitler, his ministers and their expansionist policies to wreak havoc on the European and global geopolitical landscape. Elected Germany's chancellor in 1933, he swiftly converted the country to a one-party state and attempted to impose fascism through Europe in World War II, the defining event of the 20th century. Millions of military and civilian deaths on all sides, including the wholesale murder of 6 million European Jews, ensured that the war's impact is still felt today, 80 years since the double-edged sword of nuclear warfare ended it.

1954-68

AMERICA'S CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

UNITED STATES

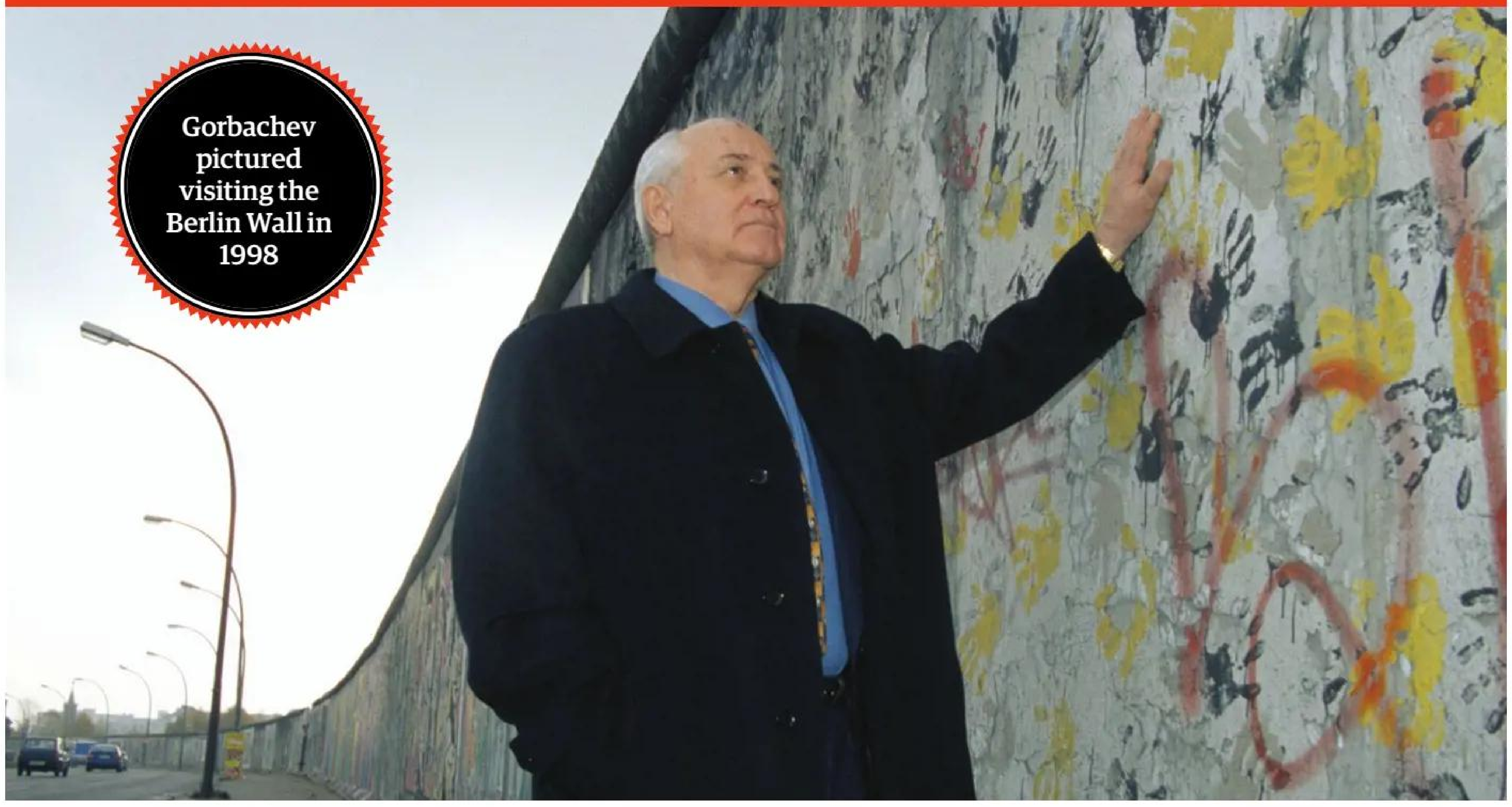
Although two centuries of institutionalised racism in America had in theory been brought to an end by President Abraham Lincoln's outlawing of slavery in 1863, Black Americans continued to face abuses in many forms throughout the US into the 20th century. The civil rights movement sought to provoke the government into action with a combination of legal action and civil disobedience, at a time when America's population was questioning its leaders' actions in the Vietnam war. Their strategy worked, with President Lyndon Johnson passing the Civil Rights Act in 1964, although Black Americans are still subject to police brutality and other discriminatory practices to this day.

1985-91

PERESTROIKA

SOVIET UNION

Perestroika ('restructuring') was the application of the principles of glasnost ('transparency') by General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, leader of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1985 to 1991. This process led to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the independence of all Moscow-controlled countries and the dissolution of the USSR, leading - amid logistical and economic chaos - to the re-emergence of all those territories, including Russia, as electoral democracies. The consequences have been mixed, with widespread public freedom offset to a certain degree by the emergence of a merciless class of oligarchs and the aggressive foreign policies of Russia's current president, Vladimir Putin.



Gorbachev pictured visiting the Berlin Wall in 1998

1985-91

THE TIANANMEN SQUARE REVOLT

1989

Deng Xiaoping's Chinese Communist Party react to pro-democracy protests by killing hundreds or perhaps thousands of the public, with an infamous image of a lone protester facing down a tank broadcast worldwide (above).

1990-94

VOTES FOR WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE EAST

1999

Qatar becomes the first Gulf state to allow women to vote and stand for election. Neighbouring countries Bahrain and Kuwait have subsequently adopted the same policy, a rarity in the region.

THE MEXICAN ONE-PARTY-STATE ENDS

2000

After 71 years of one-party rule by the Institutional Revolutionary Party, Vicente Fox of the National Action Party (right) wins the presidential elections in Mexico. He remains in power for the next six years.

A BRIEF PERIOD OF DEMOCRACY IN AFGHANISTAN

2002-21

Between the former (1996-2001) and current (2021-) reigns of the Taliban, Afghanistan is renamed an Islamic Republic with an elected president, Hamid Karzai. Parliamentary and provincial elections occur in 2005.

ELECTIONS IN IRAQ

2005

After the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, Iraqis vote in their first multi-party elections in five decades (right), despite the growing insurgency at the time. The Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani is elected president.

1990-94

THE END OF APARTHEID

SOUTH AFRICA

The lawyer and activist Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 27 years by South Africa's racist government, whose apartheid ('separatist') policies maintained the country's white dominance over its black population, despite international condemnation. When Mandela was released in 1990, he swiftly headed up the African National Congress party and was elected four years later as the country's first democratically elected president. Undoing centuries of racism is a task that will take Mandela's successors decades to complete, and the transition towards racial and economic equality has been slow and chaotic, but the necessary structures of a successful liberal democracy are finally in place.

Getty Images, Wikimedia Commons

SWITZERLAND'S DIRECT DEMOCRACY

Seven centuries of people power have made Switzerland a record breaker when it comes to referendums

Written by June Woolerton

People power through referendums has been a contentious issue in the 21st century, but while Brexit made global headlines, there is one nation where direct democracy is an everyday occurrence. Between 1900 and 2020, over half the world's referendums were held in Switzerland. Anyone from the electorate has the power to trigger a vote, continuing an active popular involvement in government that can be traced back over seven centuries.

In the Middle Ages, what we now call Switzerland proved resistant to feudalism. Small communities, reliant on agriculture, were nominally under noble power. But tough mountain conditions and the economic importance of alpine routes saw

CENTRAL GARAGE

imperial lords tread carefully. People largely ruled themselves.

In 1291, three areas known as 'cantons' signed the Federal Charter, pledging to work together for their mutual benefit. Five more joined in the next 60 years. Decisions were made within cantons by the people in public assemblies, or Landsgemeinde. Victory against the Hapsburg rulers of the Holy Roman Empire led to formally acknowledged independence from imperial jurisdiction for the combined cantons.

The communities guarded their autonomy fiercely. They set up a Tagsatzung in 1500, which included representatives from each canton but had no real power over the areas. While not feudal, they were still religious societies. The Reformation led to civil war as some cantons remained Catholic while others turned to Protestantism and, in time, an inclination to a ruling elite. Uprisings began as people fought to hold on to power.

There was resistance to Napoleon's imposition of the Helvetic Republic in 1798, which removed cantonal power. In 1815, full independence was guaranteed to a new collection of 22 cantons. But some continued pressing for centralisation. Opponents, largely Catholic communities, set up a separate alliance, the Sonderbund, leading to a brief civil war that culminated in a demand for conciliation.

In 1848, the tussle between centralisation and self-autonomy ended in the Federal Constitution and the creation of Switzerland. A bicameral assembly was established but cantons retained their sovereignty. Issues like foreign policy would be decided centrally but as much power as possible remained with cantons.

In 1874, the constitution was changed to allow referendums. The nation's direct democracy had arrived.

Switzerland's electorate is now called to the polls several times a year and has voted in over 600 referendums. Any change to the constitution triggers a mandatory referendum. But if a voter wants to change a law and gets 50,000 signatures in support, an optional referendum takes place on it. Popular initiatives propose changes to the constitution and need 100,000 signatures to reach a vote.

While it has largely been replaced by more practical voting methods, two cantons continue to use the medieval Landsgemeinde system to decide on certain issues. This involves an open-air meeting where citizens gather and vote by raising a hand in favour of a motion.

Switzerland is often held up as an example of a perfect democracy but it has its issues. Women didn't get the vote until 1971, making Switzerland one of the last countries in the Western world to achieve full suffrage. Turnout is also quite low, averaging 45 per cent. There are also concerns about popular initiatives conflicting with human rights following an upturn in debate around immigration. However, even when absolutism reigned, Switzerland put people at the heart of power. Its devotion to democracy has been – and remains – a unifying feature.

The Swiss Landsgemeinde voting system dates back to the Middle Ages, and is still used in the Appenzell Innerrhoden (pictured) and Glarus cantons

Getty Images

THE MILITANT BATTLE FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

How the fight for women's rights evolved from peaceful demonstrations to increasingly violent actions as the suffragettes battled to be given a voice

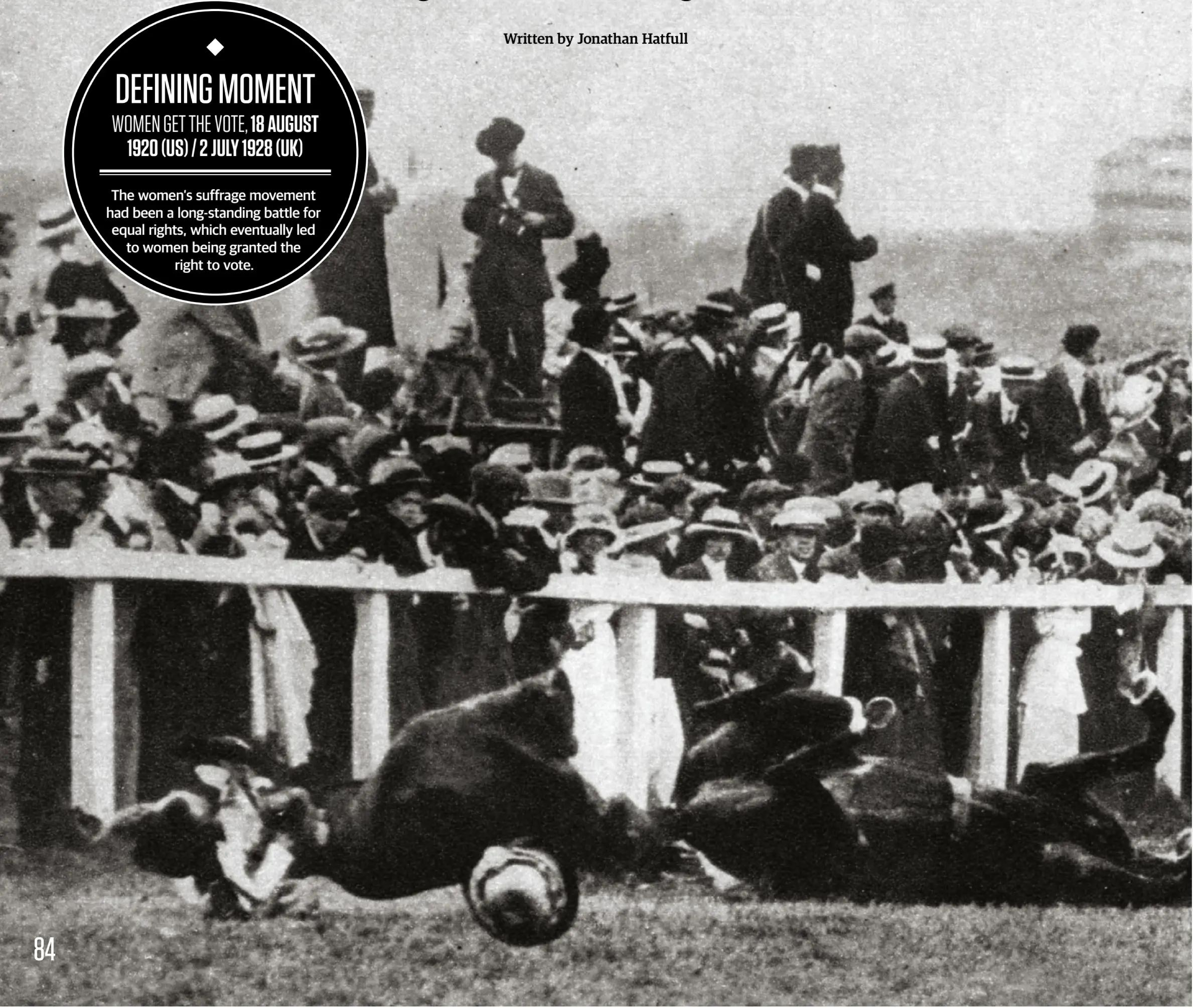
Written by Jonathan Hatfull

◆

DEFINING MOMENT

WOMEN GET THE VOTE, **18 AUGUST 1920 (US) / 2 JULY 1928 (UK)**

The women's suffrage movement had been a long-standing battle for equal rights, which eventually led to women being granted the right to vote.



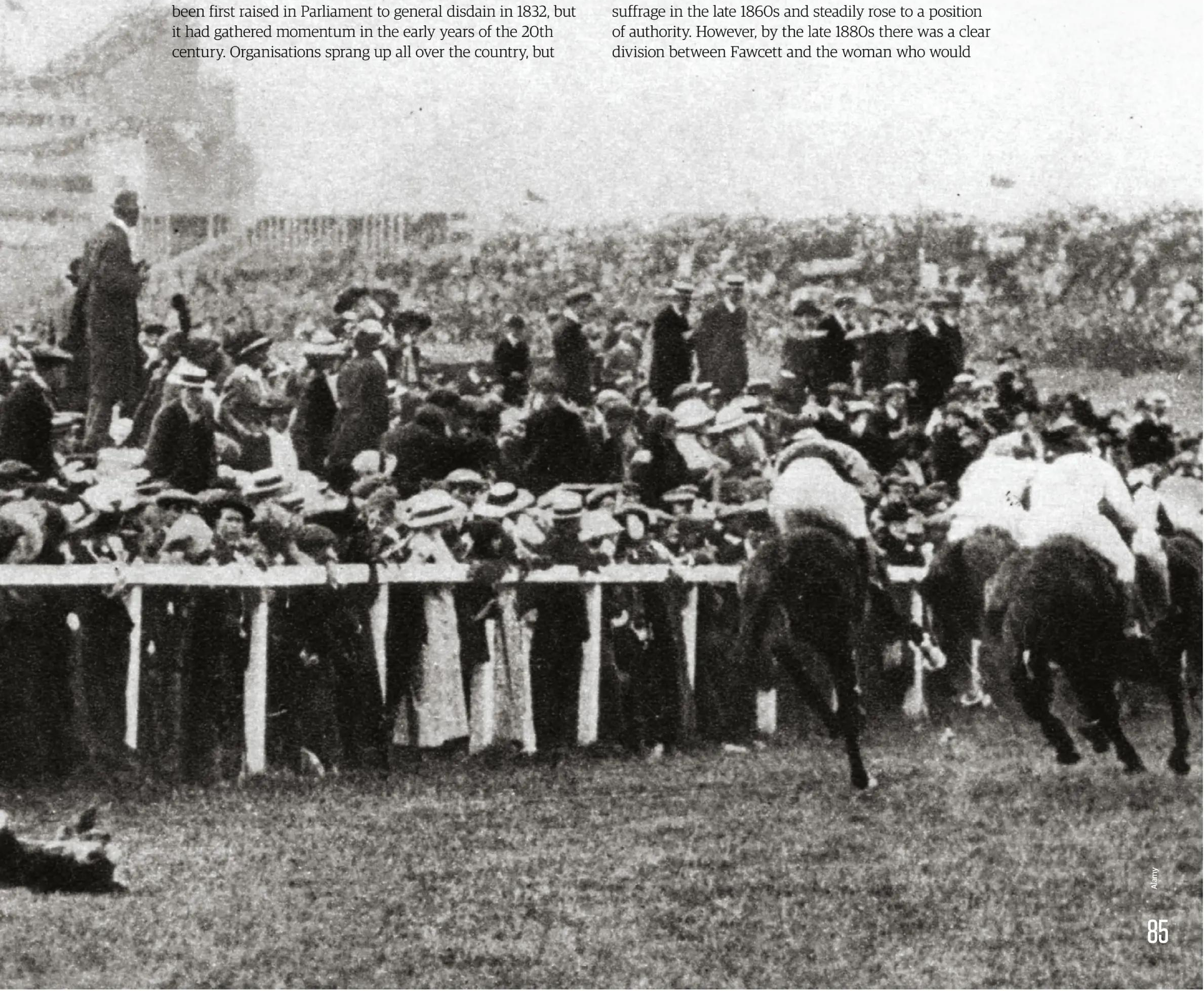
On 4 June 1913, the king's horse was at the Tattenham Corner of the Epsom Racecourse, third from last in the flat-sprint race. As it rounded the corner, its huge limbs pumping back and forth like a piston, a woman ducked under the spectators' barrier and darted onto the middle of the track, directly into the horse's path. Her name was Emily Wilding Davison and her death would be the latest outrage in an ever-more violent struggle for women's rights.

The actions of the lone suffragette would create totally opposed but equally emotional points of view. Newspapers vilified her and hate mail was sent to the hospital where she remained in a coma for four days before passing. Meanwhile, Christabel Pankhurst, living in Paris to avoid arrest, hailed Davison as, "a soldier fallen in a war of freedom." A tremendous funeral procession was arranged that used the religious-tinged language that Davison had so often used to describe her efforts. This was no ordinary struggle; this was a war, a crusade.

The fight for women's suffrage had begun decades before Davison became the movement's martyr. The issue had been first raised in Parliament to general disdain in 1832, but it had gathered momentum in the early years of the 20th century. Organisations sprang up all over the country, but disapproval also accompanied the movement, with many women believing that these suffragettes were either going too far or were simply misguided. One of these women called Buckingham Palace home. In 1870, Queen Victoria wrote:

"The Queen is most anxious to enlist everyone who can speak or write to join in checking this mad wicked folly of 'Women's Rights', with all its attendant horrors, on which her poor sex is bent, forgetting every sense of womanly feeling and propriety – God created men and women different – then let them remain each in their own position – Woman would become the most hateful, heartless, and disgusting of human beings were she allowed to unsex herself; and where would be the protection which man was intended to give to the weaker sex?"

In spite of the Queen's anxiety, a united front was formed when the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) formed in 1897, with the formidable Millicent Garrett Fawcett at its head. Committed to peaceful protest, Fawcett worked tirelessly for decades at the head of the NUWSS. She began speaking on the subject of women's suffrage in the late 1860s and steadily rose to a position of authority. However, by the late 1880s there was a clear division between Fawcett and the woman who would



Alamy

eventually lead the militant front: the equally as celebrated as notorious Emmeline Pankhurst.

Together with her daughters Christabel, Sylvia and Adela, Emmeline Pankhurst would be the driving force of the militant suffragettes, sometimes working in tandem with the more peaceful suffragists but often deeply opposed to them. Driven and relentless, her involvement with the suffragist movement began in the 1880s and she quickly graduated from hosting gatherings at her home to founding the Women's Franchise League in 1889. She and her husband Richard campaigned with the Independent Labour Party and After Richard's death in 1898 from stomach ulcers, Emmeline threw herself completely into the cause.

Emmeline Pankhurst was less concerned with hearts and minds than with grabbing the British people's attention by any means necessary. At first, she wanted to work with the Independent Labour Party (ILP), but it became clear the party was not willing to take the risks. This setback only made her more determined than ever, though, and on 10 October 1903 she created the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU). Their motto was "Deeds not words." Time would prove just how much to heart they took this motto.

Emmeline Pankhurst was a passionate leader of the women's rights movement

First militant step

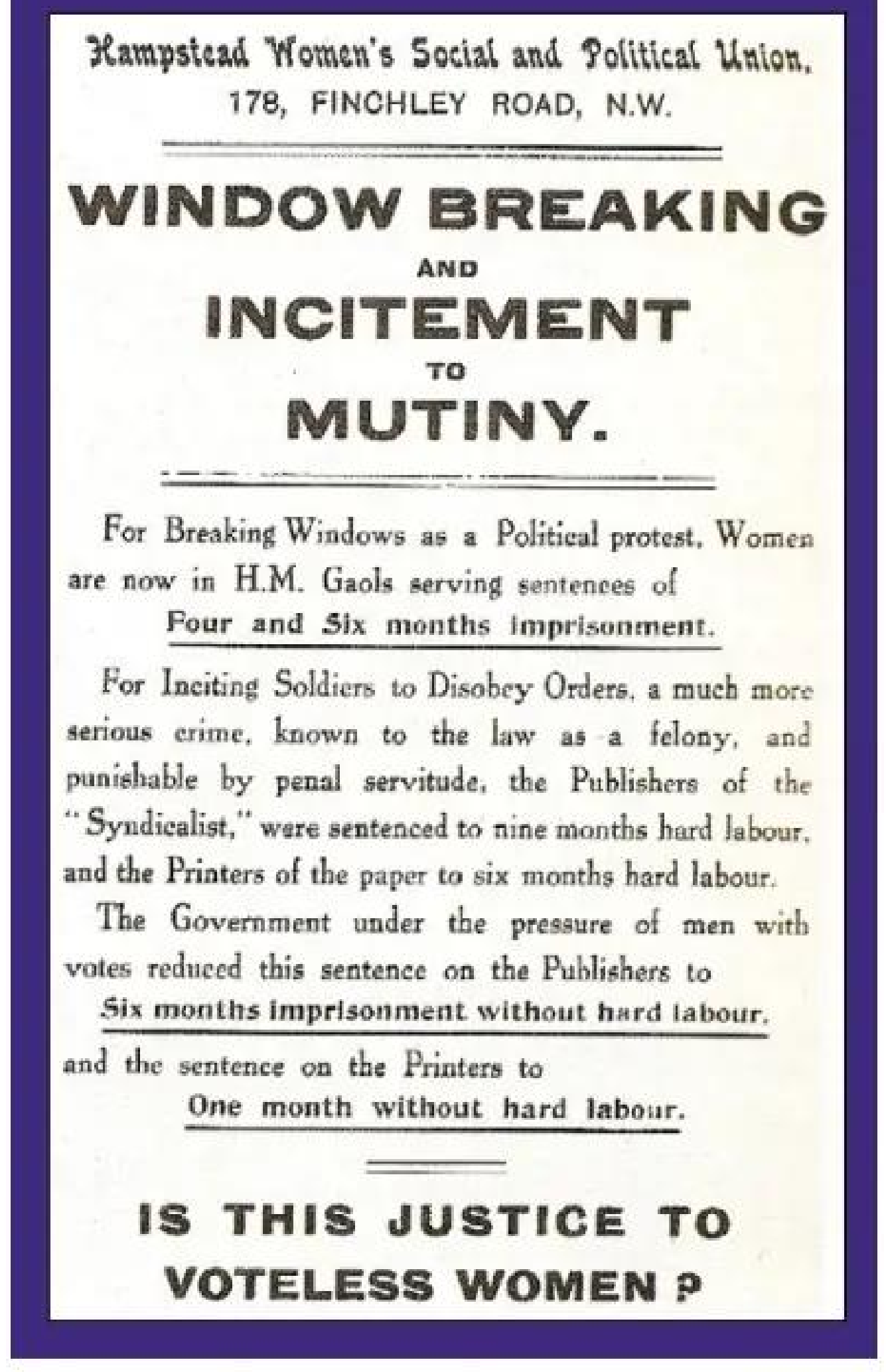
On 2 February 1904, Christabel Pankhurst entered the Free Trade Hall in Manchester where Liberal MP Winston Churchill was due to speak. When she asked for an amendment on women's suffrage, she was dismissed. Pankhurst wrote that she considered this "The first militant step - the hardest to me, because it was the first." Churchill would be persistently targeted by the suffragettes, who went so far as to write a manifesto opposing him and his leadership. The man who would lead Europe to victory in WWII would prove to be a consistent thorn in their side.

Christabel Pankhurst would be as vital and fierce a part of the suffragette movement as her mother. She took her first militant step by attending another Free Trade Hall meeting in 1905, this time with her devoted fellow suffragette, the deceptively shy Annie Kenney. Pankhurst and Kenney were ejected from the meeting by an outraged crowd and arrested for assaulting police officers. They admitted the charge, explained their cause and refused to pay the fine. They were promptly sent to prison and the refusal to take any option other than imprisonment became a feature of successive suffragette trials. They demanded the same rights as political prisoners, specifically the first division cells, but were refused.

Nationwide activities were organised from the WSPU's headquarters in London, all aimed at creating a very public spectacle. In 1906, ten women were arrested after attempting to enter the Houses of Parliament. When the WSPU members were released from prison, Millicent Garrett Fawcett held a banquet in their honour at the Savoy Hotel. At this time, much of the WSPU and NUWSS' efforts were spent on demonstrating the sheer number of people who felt passionately about the issue.

WHAT WAS THE WSPU?

- The Woman's Social and Political Union was founded at the Pankhurst home on 10 October 1903.
- It was founded to campaign for votes for women.
- Their repeated motto was "Deeds, not words."
- They initially tried to work within the political system.
- From 1905, they set out to shock with public displays.
- Their only concern was suffrage and not a broader campaign for rights, leading to splits in the group.


Hampstead Women's Social and Political Union,
178, FINCHLEY ROAD, N.W.

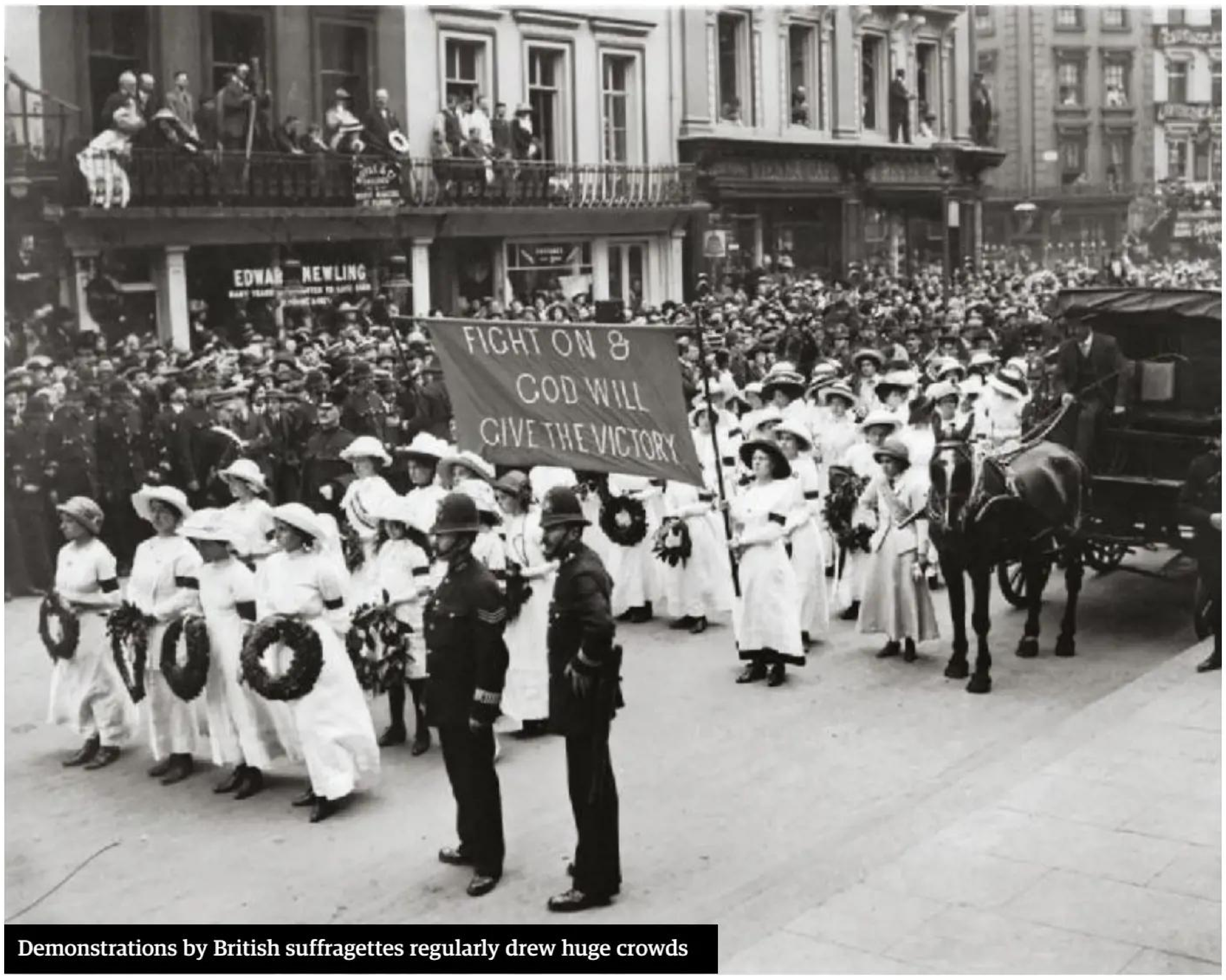
WINDOW BREAKING
AND
INCITEMENT
TO
MUTINY.

For Breaking Windows as a Political protest, Women are now in H.M. Gaols serving sentences of
Four and Six months imprisonment.

For Inciting Soldiers to Disobey Orders, a much more serious crime, known to the law as a felony, and punishable by penal servitude, the Publishers of the "Syndicalist," were sentenced to nine months hard labour, and the Printers of the paper to six months hard labour.

The Government under the pressure of men with votes reduced this sentence on the Publishers to
Six months imprisonment without hard labour,
and the sentence on the Printers to
One month without hard labour.

IS THIS JUSTICE TO
VOTELESS WOMEN ?


FIGHT ON & GOD WILL GIVE THE VICTORY
Demonstrations by British suffragettes regularly drew huge crowds

VOTES FOR WOMEN
Christabel Pankhurst and Annie Kenney with their famous campaign poster

LEADERS OF THE SUFFRAGETTES

Christabel Pankhurst

22 September 1880 – 13 February 1958

Christabel studied law in Manchester and used her expertise to great effect; issuing subpoenas for Lloyd George and Herbert Gladstone at her court appearances. Her views of women's suffrage were different to those of her sisters who had a more socialist outlook and eventually, she and her mother severed ties with them. A disguised Christabel fled to Paris to avoid arrest in 1912, but continued her role at the head of the WSPU and returned in 1914 to join her mother in the war effort. She moved to the United States and became an evangelist, briefly returning in the 1930s when she was appointed a Dame Commander of the British Empire.

Emmeline Pankhurst

15 July 1858 – 14 June 1928

After spending her youth attempting to open her own boutiques, Emmeline and her husband Richard became involved with the Labour Party. She grew frustrated with the lack of progress regarding women's suffrage and dedicated herself to the cause. She created the WSPU in 1903, backed by her daughters, and directed the group toward an increasingly militant strategy. She did not hesitate to distance herself from anyone who opposed her, including her own daughters. Despite her fragile health, she worked tirelessly and was imprisoned several times. When WWI broke out she redirected her attentions to the war effort. After the war she travelled to Canada but struggled financially, before returning to England where her health finally failed her.

Emily Wilding Davison

11 October 1872 – 8 June 1913

The youngest of nine children, she received a first class degree from Oxford but was dissatisfied with her life as a teacher, finding her calling as a member of the WSPU. From 1908 onward she threw herself into the increasingly militant activities, first imprisoned in 1909. She could be relied upon to take part in any of the group's more dangerous activities but was seen as a wild card. Her determination led to several well-publicised instances of brutality. By 1913 her health had begun to suffer from the hunger strikes and force feeding, and her family had begun to worry about her. While it is unclear whether or not Emily knew her plan for Epsom would kill her, she was determined to make history.

Millicent Garrett Fawcett

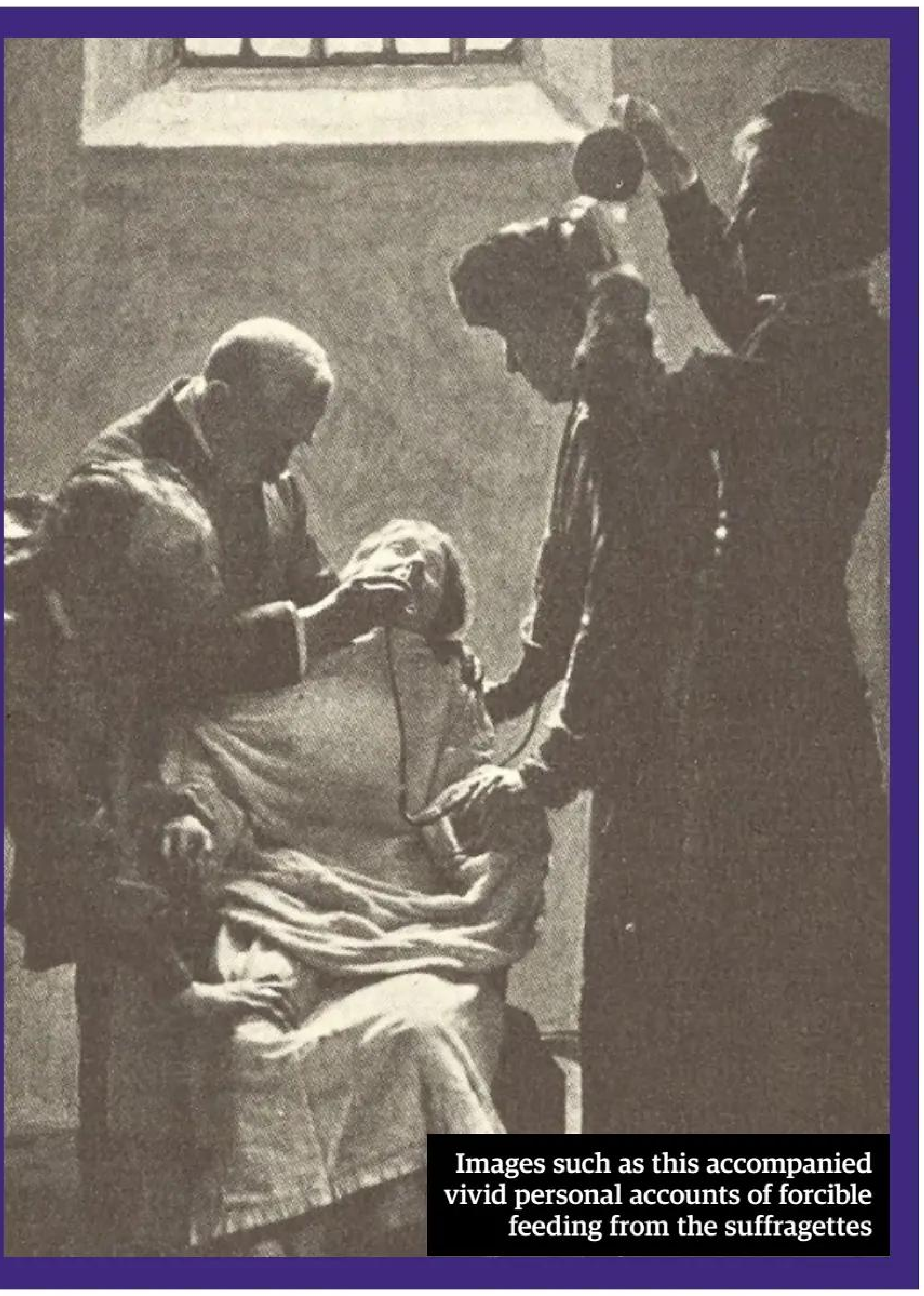
11 June 1847 – 5 August 1929

Fawcett believed in peaceful protest. She held lectures for women at her home and began speaking in public, although she was so nervous that she would get ill beforehand. Unlike Emmeline Pankhurst, her campaigning was not limited to suffrage and she was active in several other human-rights causes. As president of the NUWSS she was at first sympathetic to the militant WSPU. It was only when they became actively violent that she declared privately that they were doing more harm than good. When the war broke out she refused to support pacifist groups but continued her work with the suffragists.

Wikimedia Commons

HUNGER STRIKES

Hunger strikes began in 1909, when Marion Wallace Dunlop refused to eat after she was not treated as a political prisoner. She was released 91 hours later, but the practice of forcible feeding began soon after. The first case took place in September 1909 and quickly became common practice. The suffragettes protested this savage treatment and arrests, but forcible feeding continued. The sanitary conditions of the equipment used and the marked differences between the treatment of wealthy and poor suffragettes was controversial. The government initiated a cat-and-mouse law in 1913, which freed hunger-strike prisoners whose health was in danger, but brought them back to complete their sentences once they were deemed healthy enough. The practice continued until the outbreak of WWI.



Images such as this accompanied vivid personal accounts of forcible feeding from the suffragettes

When signed petitions had proved to accomplish little, marches and parades were organised, including the NUWSS' 'Mud March' in February 1907, in which over 3,000 women walked from Hyde Park to Exeter Hall. The government's response was to get these women off the streets and out of sight as quickly as possible, often with force. The brutal tactics used in response to peaceful demonstrations would stoke the fires of resentment.

Although Fawcett admired their zeal, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst's unwavering belief in their own decisions meant that the WSPU was drifting further apart from the NUWSS. By 1907, she and Christabel announced that they would take sole leadership of the WSPU, causing a split in the party. When the departed members founded the Women's Freedom League, the cause of women's rights had another official organisation and there was a danger that the sheer number of groups would have a negative effect. The Pankhursts simply saw this as proof of their strife and issued a call to arms for the members who had remained with them. They were going to war.

Attacks and imprisonment

On 17 January 1908, London witnessed suffragettes chained to railings outside 10 Downing Street. The following day, Emmeline Pankhurst and Ellie Martel were savagely attacked by Liberal Party supporters who blamed them for a lost by-election. Pankhurst was thrown to the ground, surrounded by a crowd of furious men before being rescued by the police. She wrote: "'Poor souls', I thought, then I said suddenly: 'Are none of you men?'" In February, Christabel enacted a 'Trojan

WHAT WERE THE MOST MILITANT ACTIVITIES?

Glass smashing

In July 1909, suffragettes threw stones at the windows of 10 Downing Street to express their rage at the arrests following the rush on the House of Commons. By October, with the first forcible feedings taking place, organised window-smashing raids had begun. These displays fulfilled the early militant aims of bringing attention to their cause and to ensure a swift arrest. They also brought disapproval from more peacefully minded campaigners who felt this was vandalism and would do more harm than good.

Arson

Beginning with Emily Wilding Davison setting fire to a pillar-box in December 1911, unsanctioned by the Pankhursts, arson would go on to be one of the most striking methods of militant protest. Following Davison's death in 1913, arson attacks were carried out all over the country. Suffragettes such as Lillian Lenton would target empty buildings and warehouses, determined that no lives be put at risk but that the situation would become utterly impossible for the government.

Hatchet throwing

Prime Minister Herbert Asquith's visit to Dublin in July 1912 would be an eventful one. Mary Leigh (who had thrown stones at 10 Downing Street), Gladys Evans, Jennie Baines and Mabel Capper were found guilty of "having committed serious outrages", which included throwing a hatchet at Asquith's carriage and attempting to set fire to the Theatre Royal where he was due to speak. Evans and Leigh were sentenced to hard labour, which drew an outraged reaction from the WSPU. The condemned were defiant.

Horse' manoeuvre, with 20 suffragettes hiding in a van driven to the House of Commons before all jumping out to face the police. In 1908, the fearsome Flora Drummond led a team of suffragettes on a steamboat along the Thames to invite MPs sitting on the Palace of Westminster Terrace to the demonstration on 21 June. The demonstration saw 30,000 suffragettes take to the streets and drew 500,000 spectators.

The consequence of these public protests was imprisonment. As more and more suffragettes were put into prison, more controversy arose over their treatment. Lady Constance Lytton wrote of the terrible hygiene, including dirty clothes, vermin and a toilet pot emptied once a day. The prison governors denied any wrongdoing as vehemently as the suffragettes accused them of it. Emmeline Pankhurst herself was arrested twice in 1908. In February, she led 13 suffragettes to the House of Commons to defy the Tumultuous Petitions Act. She knew she would be arrested and her fragile health declined rapidly once inside. However, her determination was limitless. She was summoned to the Bow Street police station in October after publishing a pamphlet urging suffragettes to 'Rush the House Of Commons!' Rather than going straight there, she told the police that she would be busy until six o'clock the next day. When she and Flora Drummond took taxis to the Bow Street station, a Liberal MP sent a lavish dinner from the Savoy Hotel to the station for the pair.

Political prisoners?

This civility was a rare exception, though. 1909 would see a radical change in the battleground as both sides refused to give any quarter. In July, a group of suffragettes threw stones at the windows of the Home Office, the Privy Council and the Treasury. Arrested on 24 June for defacing the House of Commons, where she used a rubber stamp to print an excerpt from the Bill of Rights, Marion Wallace Dunlop was sent to prison. When her request to be treated as a political prisoner was denied, Dunlop began a hunger strike and, after 91 hours without food, it was decided she should be released for her own safety. On 13 August, Edward VII's private secretary sent a note to Prime Minister Asquith. "His Majesty would be glad to know why the existing methods which must obviously exist for dealing with prisoners who refuse nourishment, should not be adopted." Forcible feeding had effectively been ordered.

WSPU organiser Laura Ainsworth wrote to Dunlop about her own experiences of being force-fed in Birmingham in September of that year. She described how her head was forced back, her mouth forced open, and tube pushed "down your mouth about 18 inches; while this is being done you first have a very great tickling sensation, then a choking feeling, and then you feel quite stunned." A gag was then forced between her teeth, and "about a pint" of food poured down the tube. "I know I must have looked as if I was being hurt because of the wardresses' faces", wrote Ainsworth.

The practice of forcible feeding caused fierce debate in the press and became another rallying point for the suffragettes.

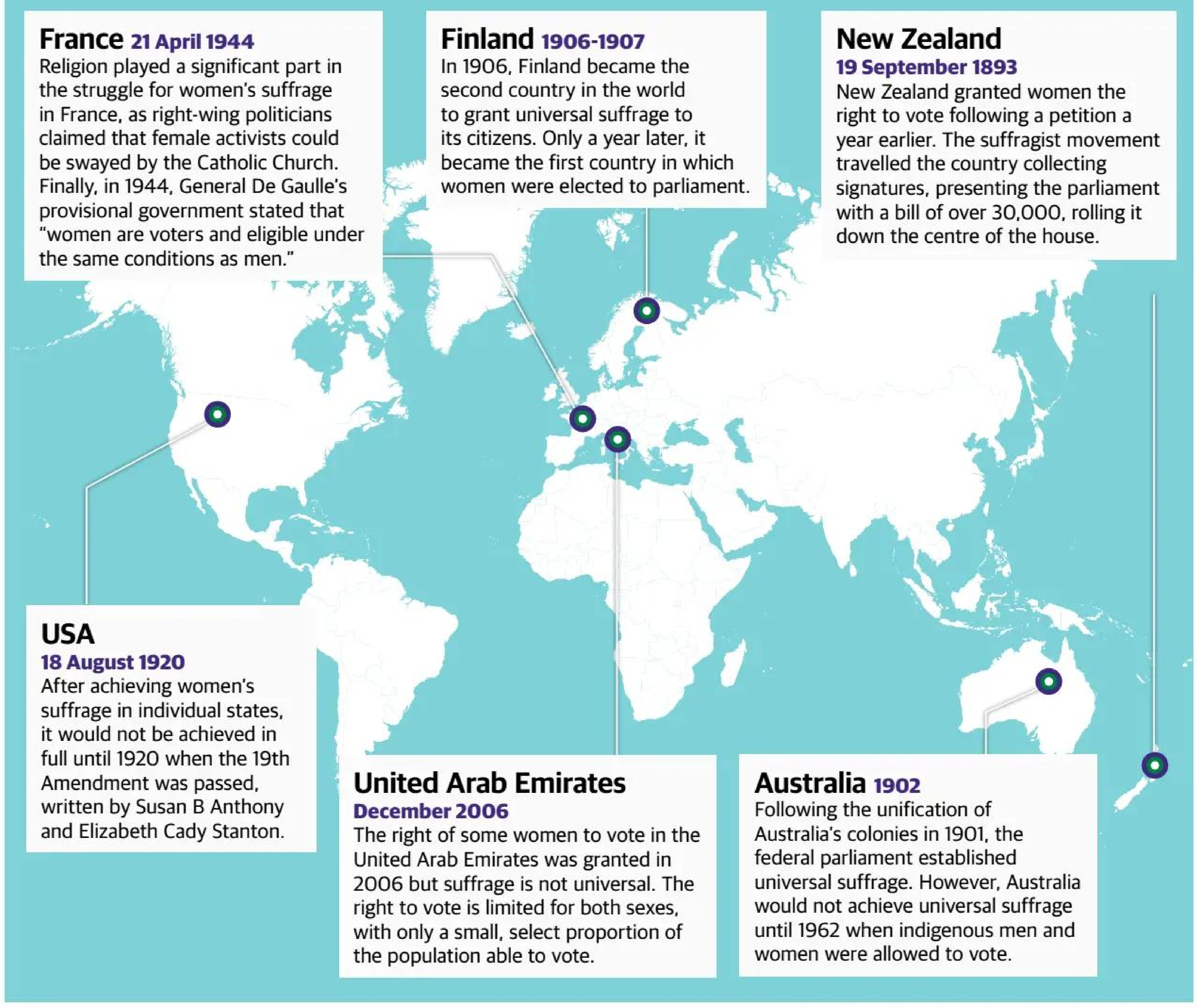
> "We have blown up the Chancellor of the Exchequer's house to wake him up"

Mary Leigh was one of the most dedicated militant suffragettes

Bombing Lloyd George's house

On 18 February 1912, the suffragettes' arson campaign led them to a house being built for David Lloyd George. Two bombs were set on timers in the empty house, one going off before the workers arrived that morning. The second remained unexploded. Emmeline Pankhurst took responsibility for the act, stating: "We have blown up the Chancellor of the Exchequer's house to wake him up." The police could not prove who planted the bombs, but sent Pankhurst to prison after she accepted responsibility.

WHEN DID WOMEN GET THE VOTE?



France 21 April 1944
Religion played a significant part in the struggle for women's suffrage in France, as right-wing politicians claimed that female activists could be swayed by the Catholic Church. Finally, in 1944, General De Gaulle's provisional government stated that "women are voters and eligible under the same conditions as men."

Finland 1906-1907
In 1906, Finland became the second country in the world to grant universal suffrage to its citizens. Only a year later, it became the first country in which women were elected to parliament.

New Zealand
19 September 1893
New Zealand granted women the right to vote following a petition a year earlier. The suffragist movement travelled the country collecting signatures, presenting the parliament with a bill of over 30,000, rolling it down the centre of the house.

USA
18 August 1920
After achieving women's suffrage in individual states, it would not be achieved in full until 1920 when the 19th Amendment was passed, written by Susan B Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.

United Arab Emirates
December 2006
The right of some women to vote in the United Arab Emirates was granted in 2006 but suffrage is not universal. The right to vote is limited for both sexes, with only a small, select proportion of the population able to vote.

Australia 1902
Following the unification of Australia's colonies in 1901, the federal parliament established universal suffrage. However, Australia would not achieve universal suffrage until 1962 when indigenous men and women were allowed to vote.

Getty Images, Alamy, Wikimedia Commons

DAVISON'S CRUSADE

Conciliation Bill torpedoed

21 November 1911

Lloyd George puts paid to any hope of the Conciliation Bill passing by announcing that he has "torpedoed" it. The truce agreed to by the militant suffragettes is over.

Starting fires

15 December 1911

Emily Wilding Davison is arrested for putting a flaming piece of linen into a pillar-box. She had announced her plans and was waiting to be arrested.

WSPU heads arrested

5 March 1912

Following a protracted window smashing campaign, the government arrests the heads of the WSPU, including the Pethick-Lawrences and Emmeline Pankhurst. Christabel Pankhurst flees to France.

Davison attempts martyrdom

4 July 1912

During a commotion in Holloway Prison, a desperate Davison throws herself off a balcony – twice – in an attempt at martyrdom as "some desperate protest." She survives.

Reform Bill removed

January 1913

The Speaker of the House of Commons declares the Reform Bill will have to be removed and submitted in a new form. Pankhurst retaliates by declaring her plan for "guerillist" attacks.

House bomb

18 February 1913

Emmeline Pankhurst takes responsibility for the bombing of an empty house belonging to Lloyd George. She states that Emily Wilding Davison had planted it, but there is no evidence of this.

Cat-and-mouse law

2 April 1913

The government introduces a cruel new scheme to handle prisoners made dangerously ill by hunger striking and forcible feeding, releasing them until they are healthy enough to return.

Derby Day tragedy

4 June 1913

Emily Wilding Davison runs in front of the king's horse at Epsom and sustains terrible injuries. She dies four days later and becomes a martyr for the cause.

Funeral procession

14 June 1913

A funeral procession for Davison takes place in London, attended by thousands, before her body is taken home to Northumberland.

MAPLES
VOTES FOR WOMEN
WEEKLY, ONE PENNY
SIR RUFUS ISAACS JUSTIFIES VIOLENCE

British suffragettes became increasingly visible in the years leading up to WWI

Emmeline Pankhurst being arrested in 1907 and, inserted, a picture of her in prison

> "Emmeline Pankhurst was less concerned with hearts and minds than with grabbing the British people's attention by any means necessary"

In a concerted effort to become more visible to the public and to ensure arrest, a glass-smashing campaign began. In October 1909, 12 suffragettes were arrested for smashing panes of glass in Newcastle and by November the imprisoned women were reporting incidents on the horrors of forcible feeding while in prison. It was splashed all over the front pages, but opinion was still divided.

In this combustible situation women like Emily Wilding Davison became notorious. Davison was one of the most dedicated of the militant suffragettes and prone to spontaneous action, and it was clear that even the Pankhursts endorsed her with a degree of caution. In Strangeways Prison in October 1909, Davison blocked the door to her cell, at which point the prison guards fired a fire hose at her through the window of her cell, after which she was force-fed in another example of institutionalised brutality.

Davison was just one of the many women who reported the violent treatment that they were put through. Lady Constance Lytton was determined to test the claim that there was no difference in the treatment of prisoners depending on their class. Having previously been arrested and deemed not healthy enough for forcible feeding on account of her heart, she was arrested in disguise under the name of Jane Wharton. The prison doctor determined that 'Jane' was perfectly healthy and ready for forcible feeding. Her brother, Lord Lytton, wrote a letter to *The Times* newspaper detailing exactly what his sister had been through. It was embarrassing for the establishment, but not enough for the status quo to change.

In 1910, it looked like a solution might be near. The Conciliation Committee had been formed with the purpose of finding some middle ground under the guidance of Millicent Garrett Fawcett's NUWSS and the WSPU agreed to a truce. The Conciliation Bill passed two readings in the Commons but when Parliament broke down on 18 November with no progress on the bill, Emmeline Pankhurst made good on her promise to march on the House of Commons with 300 women. They were met by a violent police force; the unarmed suffragettes were punched, kicked, hurled to the ground and groped by officers. 200 women were arrested and two died as a result of injuries sustained, including Pankhurst's sister Mary Jane Clarke. Despite the national press coverage of this shocking brutality, Churchill refused to allow an investigation into it, describing the suffragettes' claims as "a copious fountain of mendacity."

In a surprising show of restraint, Pankhurst decided to keep the truce until the new Parliament was in session but when Lloyd George callously announced that he had 'torpedoed' the Conciliation Bill, militancy was not only back on, it had escalated. With broken windows and arson dominating the headlines, the NUWSS despaired at the negative publicity the WSPU was creating. It was also proving a problem for the Pankhursts. In May 1912, key WSPU leaders, including Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, were charged with "conspiracy to incite certain persons to commit malicious damage to property." Christabel fled to France in disguise, while the others took their sentences.

There was an enormous outcry to transfer the suffragettes to political prisoners. The furore increased in July when Emily Wilding Davison attempted to kill herself by hurling herself from the stairs in the prison block during a 'siege.' Her idea was "that one big tragedy might save many others", but netting prevented her from achieving her goal.

Violence explodes

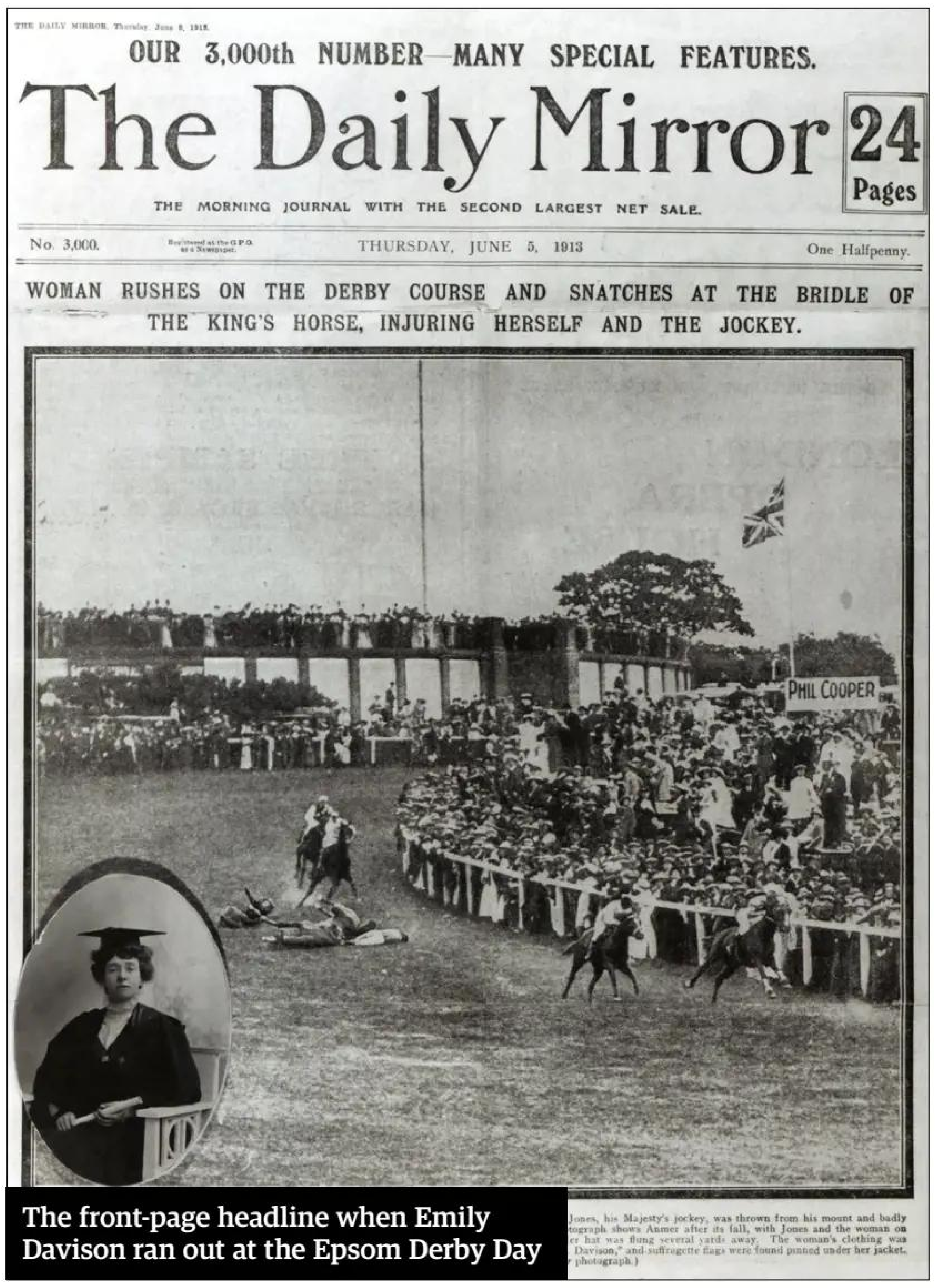
Later that month came the suffragette 'gunpowder plot' as four women attempted to set fire to the Theatre Royal following Lloyd George's visit. In a speech at the Royal Albert Hall on 17 October 1912, Emmeline compared the suffragettes to the rebellion forces in Ulster, declaring "Take me if you dare." Meanwhile, the NUWSS created ties with the Labour Party, which had become the first party to back women's suffrage. However, in January 1913 it was announced that the Reform Bill would have to be entered in a new form because it had changed so much from its original state. The WSPU commenced a new stage of its militancy and targeted the empty property of the wealthy for destruction. Explosives were left in empty houses, for which Emmeline Pankhurst took responsibility.

Noting that the health of force-fed inmates was quickly declining, the government enacted the so-called 'Cat-and-mouse' law. This meant that a prisoner who was being forcibly fed could be released if their health was a serious concern, but that they must return to prison as soon as they were deemed healthy enough to serve the rest of their sentence, to be put through the whole ordeal again. The shocking nature of this policy was widely protested but to no avail.

It was in June 1913 that Emily Wilding Davison threw herself in front of the king's horse at Epsom. The impact on both the suffragettes and their enemies was profound and the papers reported on 'The Suffragist Outrage at Epsom'.

The WSPU continued to shed members, as Christabel Pankhurst decided that her sister Sylvia, who had expressed disagreement with her views, could no longer be a part of the group. Their youngest sister Adela had already been forced out. However, it was clear that things could not go on. The WSPU membership was shrinking, either through desertion or incarceration, and it seemed as though no progress was being made. Then, on 28 July 1914, everything changed.

With the outbreak of the First World War, Emmeline and Christabel's goals suddenly shifted. They were determined to support Great Britain and ensured that members fought for their country as fiercely as they had for suffrage. The most vocal supporters of women's suffrage became some of the loudest war effort campaigners and they threw their support behind the war effort, with women working in jobs they had only shortly before been deemed unsuitable for. It might have taken something as dramatic as a world war, but when the time came for a vote on suffrage in 1918, the nation's opinion of the suffragettes had changed and women over the age of 30 got the right to vote. In 1928 the dreams of the suffragettes were realised when women finally received equal voting rights with men. Their voices had finally been heard.



THE DAILY MIRROR, Thursday, June 5, 1913.

OUR 3,000th NUMBER—MANY SPECIAL FEATURES.

The Daily Mirror

24 Pages

THE MORNING JOURNAL WITH THE SECOND LARGEST NET SALE.

No. 3,000. Registered at the G.P.O. as a Newspaper. THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 1913 One Halfpenny.

WOMAN RUSHES ON THE DERBY COURSE AND SNATCHES AT THE BRIDLE OF THE KING'S HORSE, INJURING HERSELF AND THE JOCKEY.

PHIL COOPER

Jones, his Majesty's jockey, was thrown from his mount and badly
tograph shows Anmer after its fall, with Jones and the woman on
er hat was flung several yards away. The woman's clothing was
Davison," and suffragette flags were found pinned under her jacket.
photograph.)

The front-page headline when Emily Davison ran out at the Epsom Derby Day

Getty Images, Wikimedia Commons

DEATH OF DEMOCRACY

HOW THE NAZIS TOOK POWER

Written by Jonathan Gordon

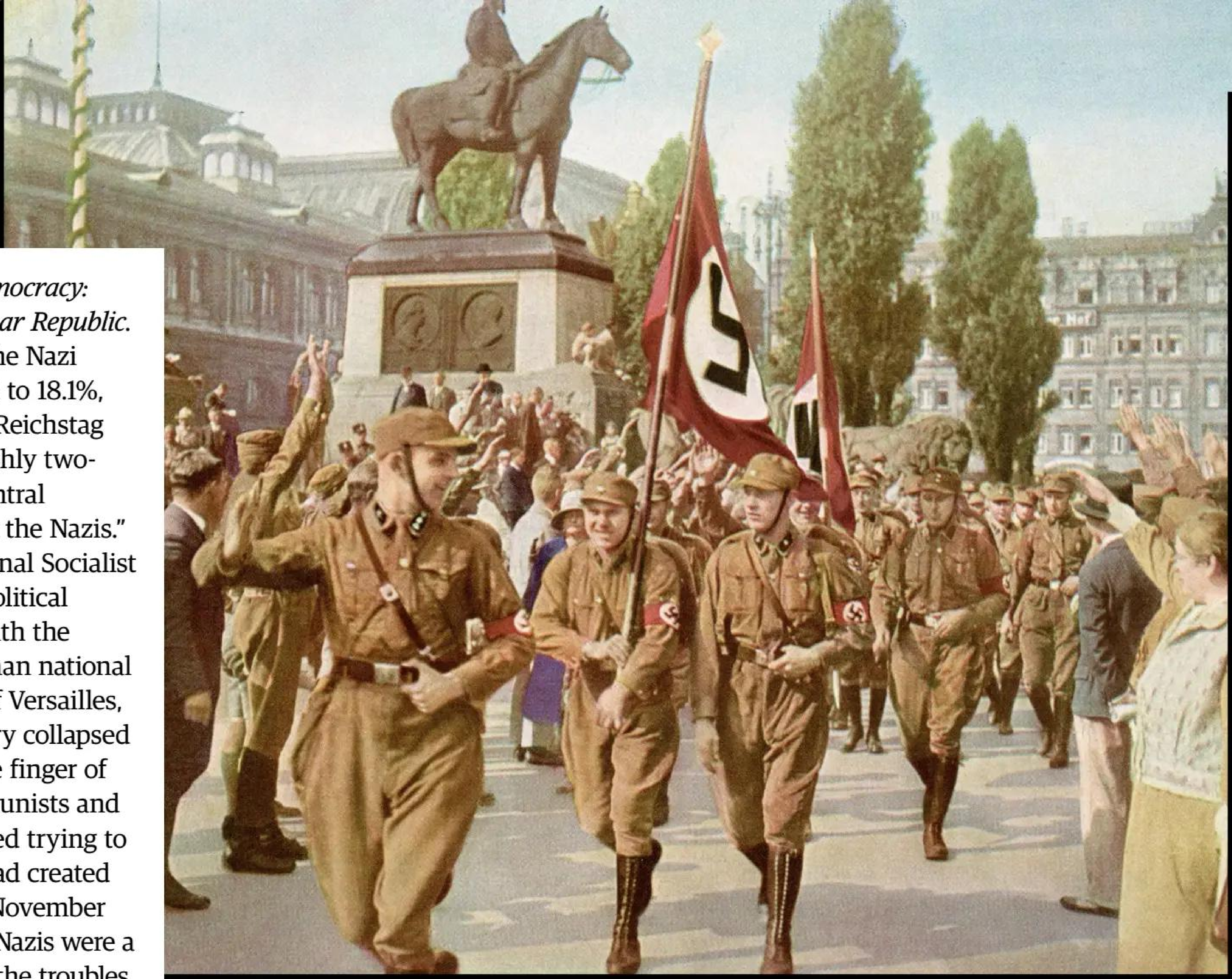
Getty Images

Hitler's gradual takeover of the levers of power in Germany is a terrifying study in how our institutions can be usurped and manipulated

It's a common misconception that the Nazis and Adolf Hitler took power in Germany by force alone. It makes some logical and emotional sense to think this must be the case. How could anyone have elected such people to rule? Surely the populace wasn't complicit in the making of the Third Reich? The truth is more complex than that, but it's fair to say that the death of democracy in Germany was a gradual process that at many turns was given the (at least superficial) endorsement of the public at large.

While the Nazi party's takeover of German institutions was methodical, its rise to a position of influence, from the late 1920's into the early 1930's, was almost meteoric. In the 1928 Reichstag elections, the National Socialist German Workers' Party (the Nazi Party's full title) got 2.6 percent of the vote, a drop from its 3 percent four years earlier. However, the Grand Coalition that resulted from the 1928 election proved ineffective against the economic onslaught of the Great Depression from 1929. It was in this environment that Adolf Hitler and his Nazi Party found fertile new ground.

"The Nazis had suddenly rocketed from being nowhere into being very important,"



says Dr Benjamin Hett, author of *The Death of Democracy: Hitler's Rise to Power and the Downfall of the Weimar Republic*. "To be precise, in the Reichstag election of 1930 the Nazi vote jumped from a previous (1928) figure of 2.6% to 18.1%, making the Nazis the second-largest party in the Reichstag after the Social Democrats. This opened up a roughly two-and-a-half year chapter of history in which the central question of German politics was what to do about the Nazis."

In those two years between elections, the National Socialist party had positioned itself as the rhetorical and political opposition to all that ailed the German people. With the oratory skills of Hitler at its head, it spoke of German national pride when there was shame around the Treaty of Versailles, it promoted German exceptionalism while industry collapsed and millions were unemployed, and it pointed the finger of blame at Jews and Marxists (meaning both communists and social democrats) while the government floundered trying to find solutions. The elite class of politicians who had created the post-war Weimar Republic were dubbed the 'November Criminals' after the November 1918 armistice. The Nazis were a party on the rise with seemingly easy solutions to the troubles of the time, but that was a far cry from where the violent revolutionary group had been only a few years previously.

Founded as the German Workers' Party by Anton Drexler in 1919 in Munich, it was renamed the National Socialist German Workers' Party the following year with Hitler quickly rising through its ranks to take over, removing the rest of the leadership by 1921. At this time it was more interested in direct action than parliamentary power, but that changed after a failed insurrection attempt, the 'Beer Hall Putsch'. The Nazis were banned and Hitler was jailed for most of 1924.

"Hitler was smart enough to realise after the failure of his 'Beer Hall Putsch' in 1924 that he and his party could not come to power with violence against the institutions of the state, especially the army and the police," says Hett. "They could only come to power by getting inside the system, and the path to that was through winning elections."

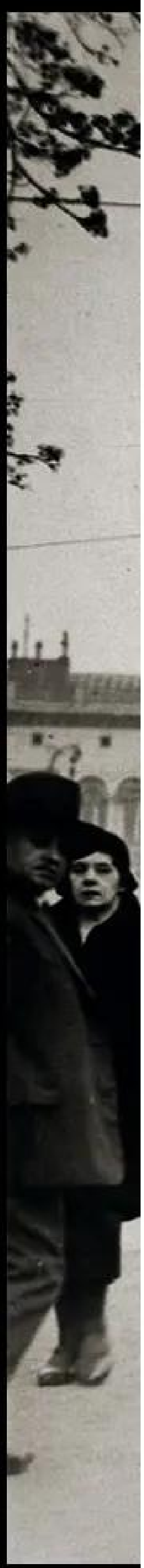
Now, the way that Hitler positioned himself had to change. The fiery oratory of the past continued, but with new layers of presentation and with omissions and obfuscations to suit the crowd the Nazis wanted to reach at any given moment.

"The Nazis could only come to power by getting inside the system, and the path to that was through winning elections"

Above: The SA, now a very large and intimidating paramilitary force, marches through Munich in 1929

For the economically conservative, they played up their anti-communism and fears of the revolution in Russia spreading to Germany, while for veterans and those still in the army it was all about military power and rebuilding national pride. For their base, antisemitism remained key, even if it was downplayed in some arenas.

"The Nazis knew that antisemitism was an issue that appealed strongly to their base but would not motivate other people to vote for them," says Hett. "So after 1930 they stressed other themes, above all that Germany was a victim of what today we would call globalisation, and that they were the nationalist line of defence against this."



The Old Guard

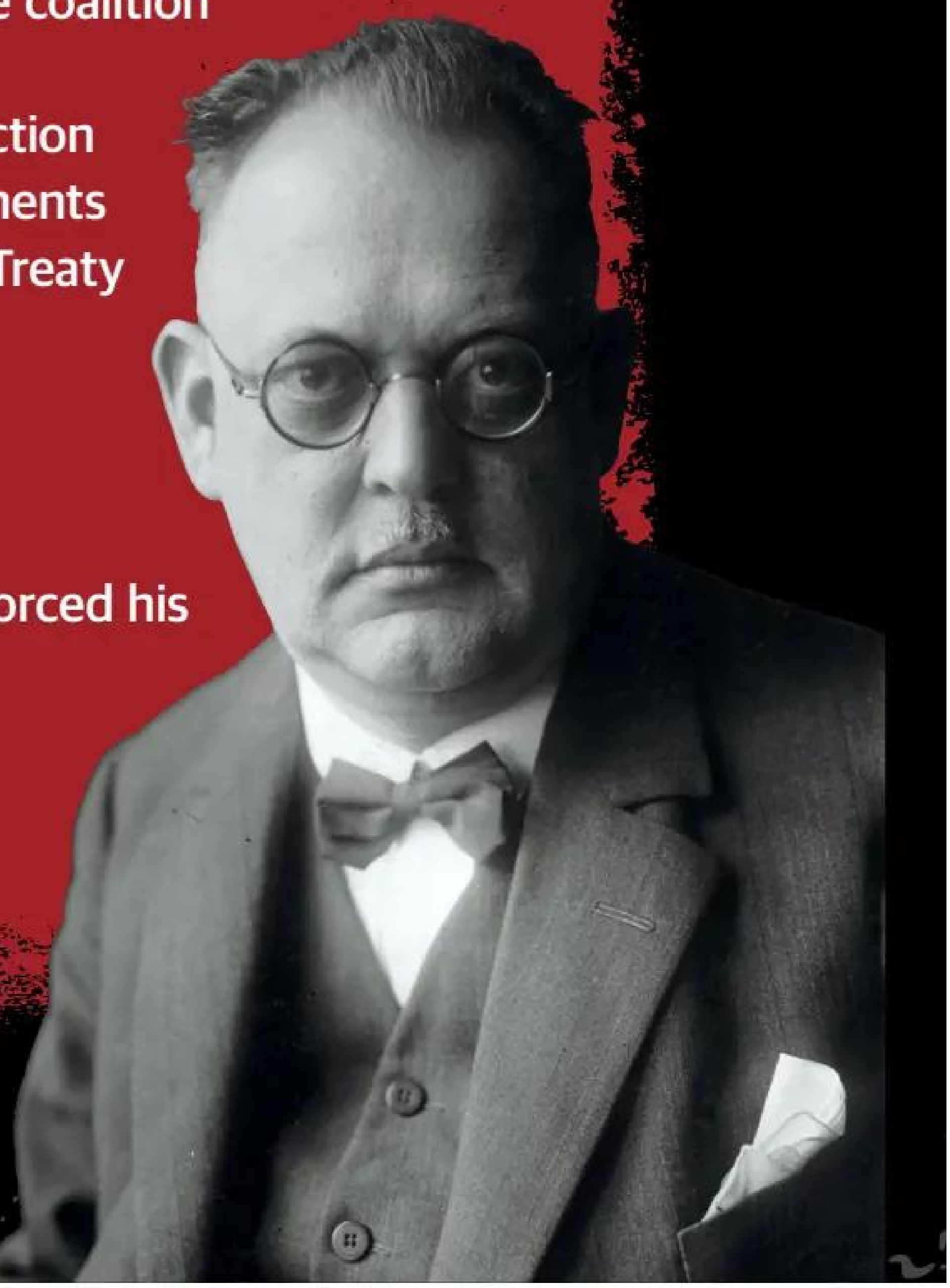
Key politicians during the rise of the Nazis

Paul von Hindenburg

Former German field marshal and later president of the Weimar Republic from 1925 to 1934, Hindenburg was one of the few consistent figures in the period of upheaval that saw the Nazis grow in influence and power. However, he seems to have been broadly in favour of a more authoritarian government, ultimately empowering Hitler as chancellor from 1933.

Hermann Müller

Chancellor of Germany for a second time from June 1928 to March 1930, Müller was leader of the Social Democratic Party, helped to form the coalition government and negotiated a reduction in reparation payments connected to the Treaty of Versailles. The Great Depression precipitated the breakup of his government and forced his resignation.



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Left: Adolf Hitler in 1930 gives a speech in a Munich beer cellar to mark the anniversary of the November Armistice

Below: A growing Nazi movement shows its strength in a march through Berlin in 1931

As some within the fracturing coalition government looked to consolidate their control of parliament, the 1930 election was called in which the Nazis became the second-largest party in parliament. With the Reichstag no less divided, Paul von Hindenburg, the second president of the Weimar Republic and a WWI field marshall, resorted to using Article 48 to bypass parliamentary approval of new government measures. This direct rule was thought necessary to end the economic crisis, but it may also have planted the seeds of dictatorship as a viable means of running the country in the minds of the public.

“Germans were not much different in this respect from other people in the world of the 1930s,” explains Hett. “Across the world there was a widespread belief that democracy was an outdated system unable to cope with 20th century problems, and that the future belonged either to fascism or to communism. But this belief was not universal, not in Germany and not elsewhere. Roughly half of German voters were still voting for non-authoritarian parties in 1932 and 1933. At the same time, Britain had its [Oswald] Mosleys and America its Bund and Silver Shirts, etc.”

The July 1932 election, also called to try to bring some stability and control to parliament, saw the Nazi share of the popular vote grow to 37.3 percent. Clearly the plan to legitimise the Nazi Party in the eyes of the German public was working, but that didn’t mean that resorting to more extraordinary measures had been abandoned. The Sturmabteilung (SA), or paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party, remained influential and was growing massively. By August 1933 it had 445,000 members, growing to 3,000,000 by June of 1934.

“Between 1930 and 1933 the main form of Nazi violence was through the Stormtroopers’ participation in the political gang wars that marked German politics at the time – which rumbled virtually every night, mostly against the paramilitary groups of the communists but also against other paramilitaries, including the establishment Nationalists’ ‘Steel Helmet’ and the democratic parties’ Reichsbanner,” Hett explains. “To an extent what the Nazis gained from this was control of territory in places like Berlin (it’s the 1930s German version of what today we call ‘ground game’ in politics), but

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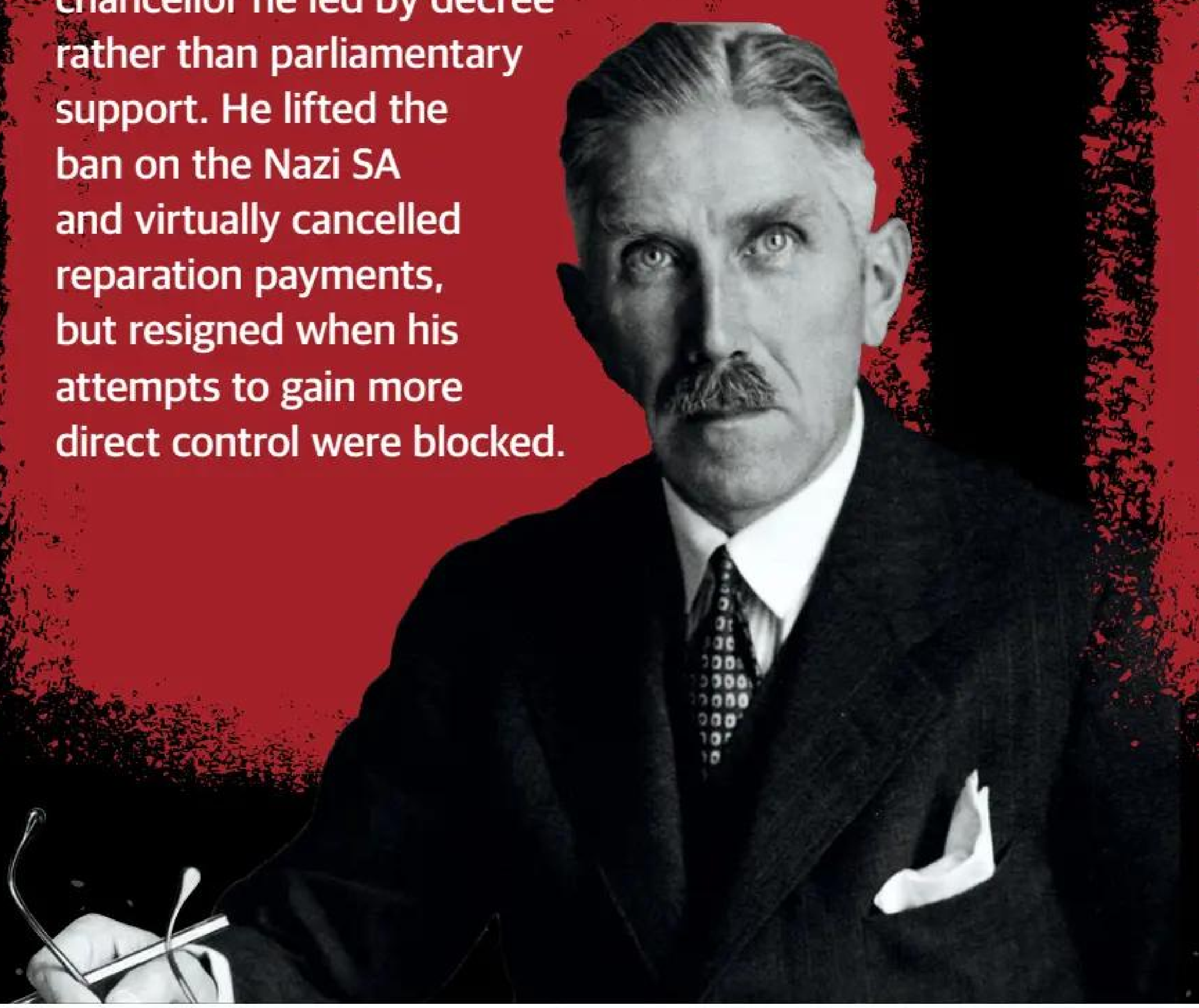
Heinrich Brüning

Chancellor from March 1930 to May 1932, Brüning was in charge at the peak of the economic crisis in Germany. He was unable to find a solution, despite often resorting to presidential decree and bypassing the oversight and approval of the Reichstag. Brüning left Germany in 1934 and taught political science in the United States at Harvard.

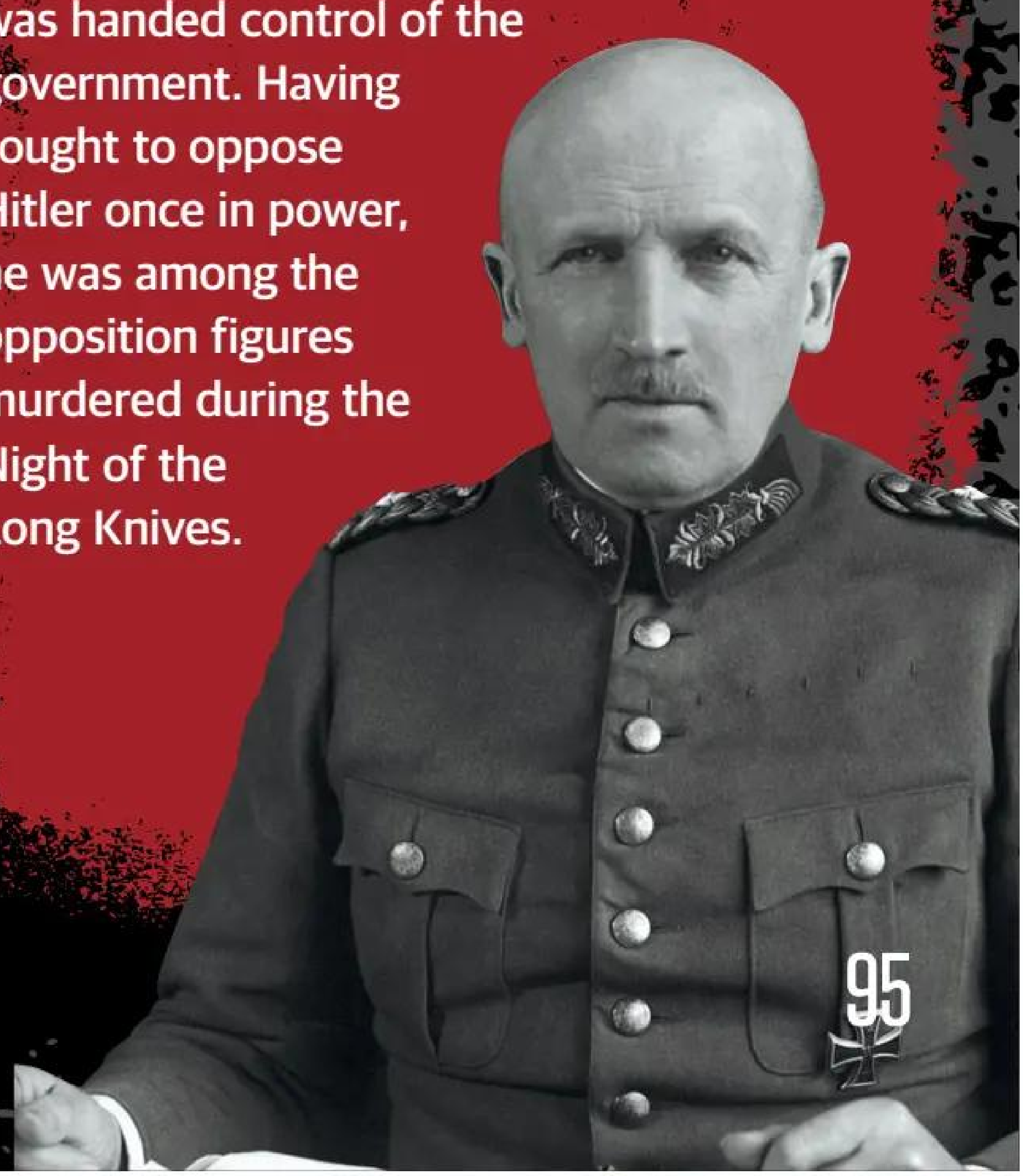
Franz von Papen

Chancellor from May 1932 to November 1932, Papen was a member of the Catholic Centre Party, which was hard-right leaning despite its name. Having been appointed chancellor he led by decree rather than parliamentary support. He lifted the ban on the Nazi SA and virtually cancelled reparation payments, but resigned when his attempts to gain more direct control were blocked.



Kurt von Schleicher

Chancellor from December 1932 to January 1933, von Schleicher’s short term in office marked the end of the Weimar Republic before Adolf Hitler was handed control of the government. Having sought to oppose Hitler once in power, he was among the opposition figures murdered during the Night of the Long Knives.



Above: Marinus van der Lubbe was arrested for starting the Reichstag blaze. While leftist figures were arrested as accomplices in a supposed plot, he was the only person convicted

more significantly, they gained a propaganda advantage – the violence made the Nazis look like the one group that had the strength and guts to take on the communists, and to middle class anti-communist voters this was a big deal."

When Chancellor Franz von Papen was unable to form a coalition in 1932 and another election in November saw the Communist Party increase its popular share of the vote, President Hindenburg turned to Adolf Hitler as the solution. On 30 January 1933, Hitler was appointed chancellor by Hindenburg, with the conservative parties of the Reichstag hoping that his popularity with the public would bolster their efforts to bring stability to the country. But they drastically underestimated the ambition and guile of the Nazi leader, who quickly manoeuvred the coalition into more direct power for himself.

Hitler called another election on 31 January 1933 to take place on 5 March. However, on 27 February the Reichstag building, the home of parliament, was set on fire and burned down. An unemployed Dutch construction worker named Marinus van der Lubbe was arrested for the crime. Historians remain divided on whether he was solely responsible, involved in a wider plot as the Nazis claimed, or was a scapegoat for a Nazi-orchestrated attack. In any event, he was a convenient propaganda tool for the Nazis and was found guilty of the fire and executed. Meanwhile, the Nazis used the fire to fuel fear of a communist plot and 4,000 people were imprisoned in the ensuing crackdown.

However, it didn't necessarily create the public backlash the Nazis might have been expecting. "It is striking that even with the advantages of incumbency and all the coercion and intimidation they could apply, the Nazis still fell short of a majority in the elections that took place six days after the fire," says Hett. "The real importance of the fire was that it gave Hitler a pretext to pass the Reichstag Fire Decree, which dramatically enhanced the powers of his government and essentially made him a dictator literally overnight."

The decree, signed by President Hindenburg at the urging of Hitler the day after the fire, gave the Nazi leader emergency powers, suspending democratic processes and allowing the party to seek 'justice' by any means it saw fit. While perceived enemies were imprisoned, freedom of speech, assembly, right to own property and fair trial were

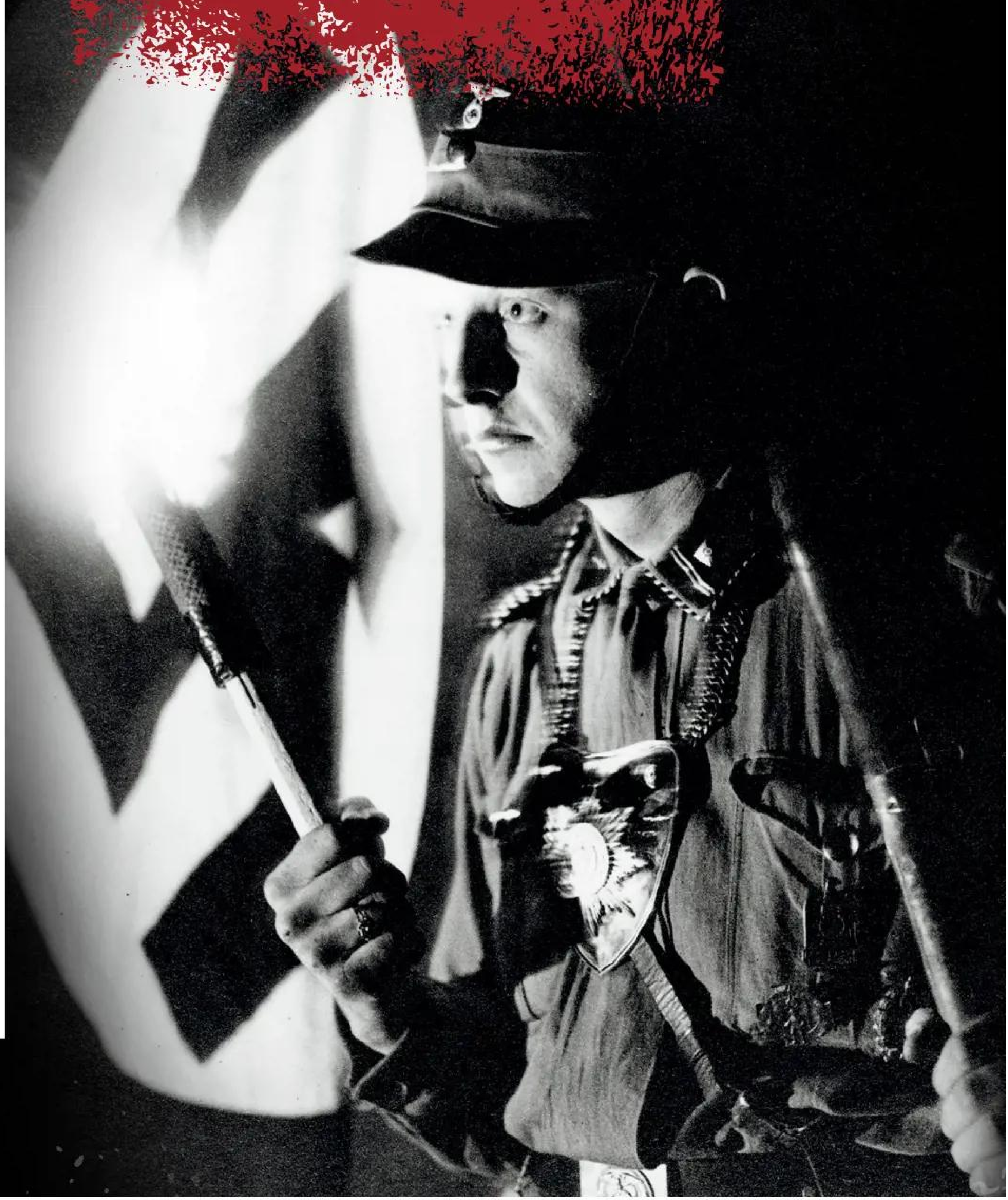
What was the SA?

The organisation played a key role in Hitler's rise to power

The Sturmabteilung (meaning Assault Division), commonly known as the SA, Storm Troopers or Brownshirts, was the paramilitary wing of the Nazi Party, originally founded by Adolf Hitler in 1921. It filled its ranks in the early years largely from veterans like Hitler himself, and its primary activity was engaging in street fights with leftist activists. Political violence like this was increasingly common in this era, and not just in Germany.

The brownshirt uniform was inspired by Benito Mussolini's Fascist Blackshirts and SA men were employed to act as security and protection for Nazi rallies or meetings. Even while Hitler moved the party towards parliamentary success and 'legitimacy', the SA continued its violence in the streets and saw its numbers balloon to an estimated 3,000,000 at the height of its power under Ernst Röhm.

The SA was a key tool in the Nazi terror campaign against Jews and left-leaning political figures leading up to Hitler taking power, but was heavily depleted by the Night of the Long Knives attacks. It continued to play a role in the party, but this was greatly reduced as the levers of power and arms of the state came under Nazi control.



“The violence made the Nazis look like the one group that had the strength and guts to take on the communists”

all suspended as well, allowing the Nazis to use the SA to intimidate and imprison virtually anyone who stood against them. It’s estimated that around 200,000 people were jailed in this period. The number was so large that the first Nazi concentration camp, Dachau, was opened to handle the new prisoners, where torture and abuse were common.

The ensuing election can therefore not be considered free or fair by any measure despite an 89 percent turnout. While it still didn’t give Hitler the majority he needed, his proposal of the Enabling Law that would allow him to bypass the Reichstag and president to make decisions made that irrelevant so long as it passed with a two-thirds majority. With the backing of the conservative German National People’s Party (DNVP) and with the left-leaning Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) barred from attending the vote on 24 March 1933, Hitler’s proposal was passed by 444 votes to 94, a key step in usurping the democratic institutions of the state. “In the wake of this law came what the Nazis called ‘Gleichschaltung’, or coordination, a process in which any organisation that could possibly form the basis of opposition was abolished or taken over by the Nazis,” says Hett. “This process was largely completed by July 1933, when all political parties except the Nazis were formally outlawed.”

The other important element of ‘Gleichschaltung’ was the Nazification of the civil service, in particular the judiciary. The Act for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service on 7 April 1933 (followed up in 1937 by the German Civil Service Code), allowed for the removal of anyone with a non-Aryan background from the civil service. Combined with the institution of the People’s Court the same month, to replace the Supreme Court, the Nazis now had far greater control of lawmaking and the justice system. Alongside this, Joseph Goebbels was made Minister for Public Engagement and Propaganda, giving him control of media, film, theatre, arts and other cultural areas, all of which were redirected to promoting Nazi ideology.

While this gave Hitler more control in the halls of power it was another matter out on the street, where the Nazis had first made their name. As mentioned, the paramilitary SA was growing to millions strong and Hitler saw its head, Ernst Röhm, as a challenger to his leadership who still advocated revolution. Hitler’s concern was seemingly fed by Minister of the Interior Hermann Göring and SS chief Heinrich Himmler. The result was the Night of the Long Knives, between 30 June and 2 July 1934, in which senior SA members and other opponents, including former chancellor Kurt von Schleicher, were arrested and many executed without trial.

Röhm was personally placed under arrest by Hitler after having been ordered to attend a hotel in Bad Wiessee, Bavaria. He was pardoned at first but was later given the choice of suicide or execution and, refusing to kill himself, was shot on 1 July by the SS. All of this was done under the guise of stopping a plot to topple the government from within the SA.

Hett points to three ways this helped to consolidate Nazi control of the state: “In murdering some of the more radical Nazi activists, Hitler ended any potential threat to his power from that direction and stabilised his revolution. Second, in so doing he ensured the loyalty or at least support of the army high command, which had been worried about Röhm’s desire to use his position as the base for a new army. Third, and often overlooked, many of the victims of the purge were establishment conservatives who had been plotting a coup against Hitler from, so to speak, his right. Their killings put an end to this kind of idea until the army started getting worried again in 1938.”

Shortly after this, President Hindenburg died at the age of 87 and a referendum was held on 19 August 1934 to approve the merging of president and chancellor as führer and chancellor. With a turnout of 95.7 percent and 89.3 percent approving, Hitler now had sole leadership, tacitly approved by the German people, the final step in the Nazis’ usurping democratic rule. “It’s what I would call, to use a phrase from Churchill, ‘the end of the beginning’,” says Hett. “The referendum that approved Hitler’s combining the offices of chancellor and president and becoming designated ‘führer and chancellor’ completed the crushing of the democratic state that really began with the Reichstag fire. Hitler would always struggle in some ways for full control, however, above all with elements of the armed forces, intelligence and diplomatic services. That struggle forms one of the main narrative threads of the rest of the Third Reich’s history.”

Below left: The Reichstag Fire was an important catalyst for the Nazis to consolidate power by stoking fear of a communist revolutionary plot

Below right: Hitler standing with President Paul von Hindenburg, who appointed the Nazi leader as chancellor in 1933

Bottom: Thousands gather on the Schlossplatz in Berlin in support of Hitler

DEUTSCHEN VOLKE

Getty Images

India was the first country to use electoral ink to help prevent election fraud in 1962. The practice is now employed by many countries around the world

DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

The world's largest democracy of over a billion people began in 1947 when India won independence from the British, birthing a republic

Written by Arisa Loomba

The long story of India's modern democracy begins in the 17th century, when Britain first began its involvement with India, one that would lead to formal and informal rule lasting centuries. Initially a trading relationship, by 1858 the British Crown itself ruled and governed much of South Asia. Under British rule, the Indian subcontinent did not experience a democratic political life. Governance only served the interests of British officials and a few of the most elite Indians. To concede to growing Indian unrest against the Crown, there were small offerings of participation extended to some Indian groups, but these were few and far between.

From 1861 onwards, a series of Acts introduced some Indian representation and participation within the legislative councils and provided provincial elections and greater regional autonomy, as it seemed untenable to continue ruling regions that were revolting on a regular basis. On the whole though, most Indians continued to be excluded from political processes, and did not gain access to voting or having a say in who they were led by until after independence. Indians were seen as an inferior race who were incapable of governing themselves, and were treated as such, often

Getty Images

Jawaharlal Nehru (left) and Mahatma Gandhi (right) were leading figures in the Indian nationalist movement

ELECTIONS IN INDIA: THE LARGEST DEMOCRATIC EVENT ON EARTH

As you might expect, elections in India are a colossal logistical challenge. Every five years, 543 Members of Parliament are elected to the Lok Sabha, deciding the next ruling party and the prime minister. There are other elections too, to decide on the president of India, local government and so on. The approximately 969 million registered voters make up more than 10% of the world's entire population! With so many people across so much land, it would not be hard to cheat or involve bias in election results, something that the Electoral Commission of India battles fiercely against. To ensure everyone has a fair opportunity to vote, and that no corruption, misconduct or errors are missed, there are over 1 million polling stations all over the country, and voting has to take place over 44 days, in seven phases. An incredible amount of security and infrastructure is put in place. To keep things together, 15 million personnel and hundreds of observers are employed to oversee the polls and detect any malpractice, and more than half of polling stations actually have cameras that livestream the proceedings for utmost transparency. Security forces are deployed using 100,000 vehicles sent all over the country, as well as on helicopters and trains. Since 2004, the implementation of technologies that verify voters and electronic voting machines have streamlined the process further, as speed is very beneficial to keeping things moving. Materials also have to be printed in over 20 languages to ensure everyone can understand and feel included in this national event.

There has been a huge increase in women, tribal communities and people with disabilities being able to register to vote in recent years, made easier by the unique identity cards of 'Aadhaar cards' that every Indian holds. In such a huge nation with a varied geography of mountains, deserts, jungles, islands and coastline, this necessitates polling stations being set up in incredibly remote and poverty-afflicted areas to reach people who are otherwise quite removed from the rest of the country. This painstaking exercise demonstrates India's commitment to free and fair participation in politics for every person.

ENTRY
FEMALE

ABOVE Lord Mountbatten (centre right) oversaw the partition of British India into India and Pakistan

ABOVE LEFT Indira Gandhi was elected as India's first female prime minister in 1966, making her the most powerful woman in the world at the time

through incredibly violent means that saw ordinary people denied freedom, as well as being murdered, massacred and starved.

India's journey into democracy began with its independence from British rule in 1947, a moment that followed almost a century of fighting, campaigning and negotiating with Britain for freedom. This struggle was multifaceted and involved individuals, groups and factions from all corners of the nation, spanning the political spectrum, religions, languages, castes and ethnicities. Everyone had their own vision for what an independent India ought to look like. Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru emerged as key leaders of the mass independence movement, believing in socialism and secularism. They felt that non-violent resistance, boycotting and non-cooperation with the colonial government was a more successful route than violent aggression. But even Gandhi and Nehru had supported and espoused violence at first, so passionate were they about overthrowing British rule.

Economic boycotts of British goods and institutions, along with large-scale protests, marches and mass-mobilisation were some of the most effective actions in the independence movement. After World War II, Indian independence seemed increasingly inevitable as the war wrecked the British economy and weakened them politically. Gandhi declared a hunger strike, refusing to eat until India was free. He almost died, and inspired the sympathy of the world. International pressure mounted, encouraging Britain to give up the 'jewel' in its crown. It soon seemed impossible to maintain control over a region so filled with unrest and that was increasingly uniting against Britain in a common cause, exemplified in 1946 when the Royal Indian Navy staged a successful mutiny that exposed the instability and limits of British authority.

On 15 August 1947, a new dawn began for India as its own nation - but there was a cost. Britain drew up borders partitioning the country, which caused upheavals and the largest and most violent mass migration in history, killing 1 million people. India's constitution was finally adopted in 1950, providing a clear framework of socialist and secular values under which the nation should be run. Enshrined in the constitution are the fundamental rights, equality and freedom of all people, banning discrimination on the grounds of caste - a hierarchical social structure that had previously limited the rights and opportunities of those at the bottom. This followed the dream of what an independent India could look like, as envisioned by figureheads like Gandhi.

The new nation adopted some of the political institutions of its old ruler, and diverted to create its own traditions in other areas. A number of institutions were developed to support the new democratic system. The key features of Indian democracy include a parliamentary system with an upper and lower house, which is modelled on the British Parliamentary system at Westminster. Federal power is shared between the central and state governments, and a prime minister leads the governing party, appointed by a president who is the head of state.

Importantly, India extends universal suffrage, meaning every person over the age of 18 is able to vote in elections. The extension of universal adult suffrage across such a large and diverse population was a major achievement of post-independence India. It makes India a participatory nation in which every person gets a say and shows that the development of the nation into a democracy was not entirely dictated by an elite political bourgeois class. This marked a welcome break from a long elitist colonial past that was top-down and authoritarian.

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> "Indian democracy is not just something devised by politicians, but constantly contributed, fought for, shaped and reshaped by the very people it was designed to serve"

ABOVE Citizens queuing to cast their votes on election day in 2016. As of 2024, India has nearly 970 million registered voters

LEFT Celebrations in Mumbai (then Bombay) in August 1947 as India became independent. At the time it was the largest demonstration in the city's history

Since independence, India's colossal democracy has slowly evolved over time. For instance, in 1992 a system of local self-government was introduced to bring democracy even closer to the people. Ordinary Indians were a driving force for democratic citizenship by fighting for their voting rights and encouraging the adoption of full democracy in the young nation. This began a long and lively (but also often violent and fractured) tradition of enthusiastic grassroots, bottom-up participation in politics by the people, who see themselves as guardians of democracy with a duty to protect and uphold it. Indian democracy is not just something devised by politicians, but constantly contributed, fought for, shaped and reshaped by the very people it was designed to serve.

For the first few decades of India's history as a standalone nation, it was dominated by the rule of the Congress Party, headed by the Nehru dynasty, a family spearheaded by the first prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, and his daughter, Indira Gandhi who came to power in 1966. A significant challenge and shift in the post-independence atmosphere came in 1975 when Prime Minister Gandhi declared a state of 'Emergency', suspending civil liberties and arresting political opponents after having been found to have committed malpractice in her most recent electoral victory. Perhaps realising her grave mistake, she called an election in 1977 and a non-Congress government came to power for the first time, though only briefly as Gandhi quickly returned to power. Gandhi's assassination in 1984 by her Sikh bodyguards triggered a wave of horrifically violent and murderous pogroms against Sikh people. Religious, sectarian and inter-caste violence continues to be a major issue in modern India.

The 1990s until the 2010s was a period of coalition governments and increasing economic liberalisation as India sought to become a more powerful capitalistic power on the global stage. It has also been the period in which lower caste groups have been given greater representation and opportunities through actions like quotas to participate in India's democracy. This had not been the case previously and caste remains a majorly contentious political issue. Since 2014, under the prime-ministership of Narendra Modi, who leads the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), India has seen a shift towards Hindu Nationalism, which is less tolerant of religious minorities, particularly Muslims, and this discrimination is either ignored or even endorsed from the very top, raising huge concerns.

Challenges have also arisen due to the many secessionist movements that have arisen from religious or ethnic groups, or individual states, demanding greater autonomy or threatening to remove themselves from the nation of India and form independent states. They feel underrepresented and unheard in such a vast and diverse country led by a central government that is primarily Hindu, North Indian, higher caste, and Hindi speaking. Many resist the imposition of a pan-Indian identity, which is really one that fits only those identities. English is often preferred over Hindi as a national language for India, which non-Hindi speaking groups feel is an imposition that seeks to flatten and enforce Hindi and North Indian ethnicity and identity as superior over the rest of the population. In fact, many feel that had the British Empire not ruled the region or crudely drawn the borders that created modern 'India' before independence, India may never have existed as we know it today. Perhaps there are far too many minorities and diverse communities living under one government, drawn together on one map, to ever keep everyone happy and peaceful.

India's democracy is by no means perfect, and continues to face many challenges to this day, such as ever-present corruption, economic inequality, religious extremism that poses threats to press freedoms and civil liberties, and discrimination along religious and caste lines that exacerbate tensions and unrest and a desire for change. Many argue that democracy is being eroded and threatened in India now more than ever. Yet, there is no denying that for such a large nation, devising a democratic system that incorporates the inalienable rights of over a billion people is a remarkable achievement in the history of democracy.

Getty Images

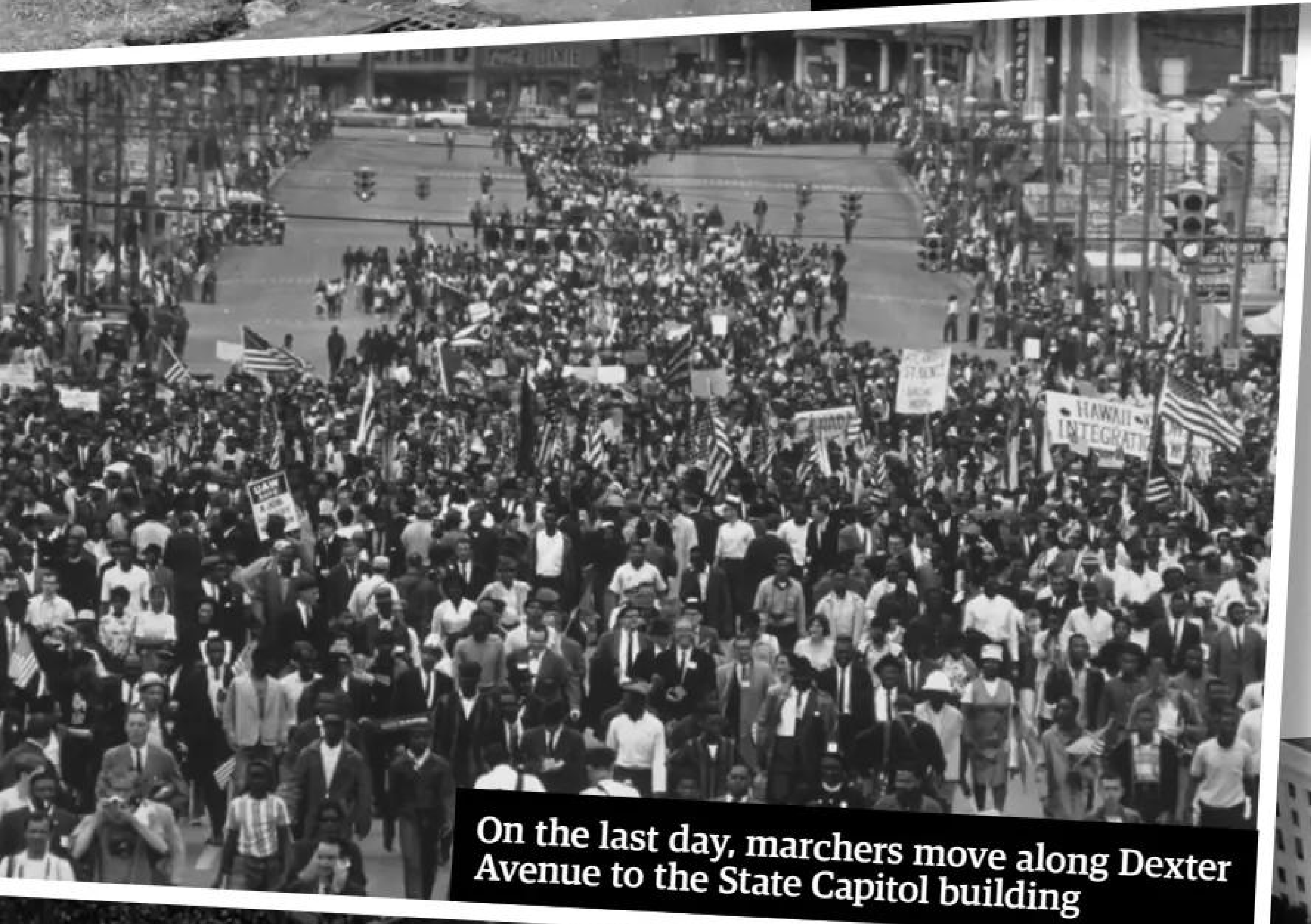
THE LONG MARCH TO VOTE

While the Civil Rights Act had outlawed discrimination, in the South many black people were still effectively disenfranchised. In 1964, the struggle turned to the right to vote

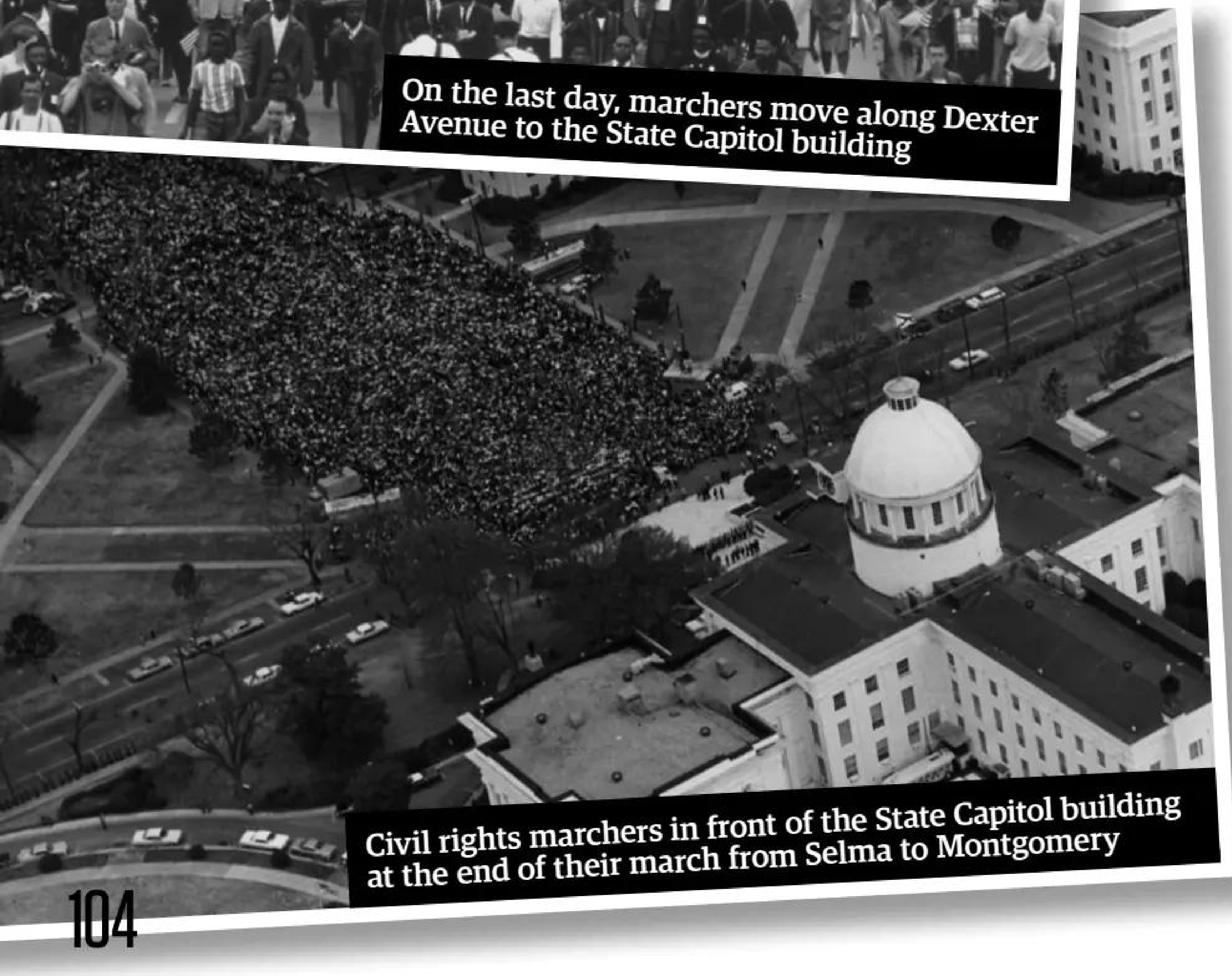
Written by Edoardo Albert

E.A. DRINKARD G
Coca-Cola

Participants in the Selma to Montgomery marches in 1965



On the last day, marchers move along Dexter Avenue to the State Capitol building



Civil rights marchers in front of the State Capitol building at the end of their march from Selma to Montgomery

On 2 July 1964, President Lyndon Johnson had signed the Civil Rights Act, outlawing discrimination on the basis of colour, race, religion or sex. But while the passage of the act through Congress and the Senate was a historic achievement, blacks in Southern states still faced entrenched discrimination, in particular with respect to voting rights. For instance, the Alabama state legislature required people registering to vote to pass a literacy test and pay a poll tax. What made the discrimination even more invidious was the test being administered by white people whose judgement was final and often arbitrary. Every effort was made to make it difficult for black people to even attempt to register, with restricted opening hours for centres of registration (often only one or two days a month), intimidation and threats of sacking to anyone who did try to register to vote. The end result was that in Dallas County, Alabama, according to a 1961 report, only 130 blacks were registered to vote, out of a population of 15,000 eligible voters. Dallas County, with Selma as its county seat, had a majority of black citizens but, because so many were disenfranchised, political power there lay in the hands of the white minority - and they intended to keep it.

Local activists in Selma and Dallas County had made repeated attempts to register voters but when these failed, eight people invited the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to assist in gaining local black people their rights. One of the factors that led the SCLC board, including Dr Martin Luther King, to accept the invitation was the reputation the Dallas County police force, under its sheriff, Jim Clark, had for brutality. Clark employed 200 deputies, some of whom were members of the Ku Klux Klan, arming them with electric cattle prods. Dr King and the SCLC had learned that time-honoured rule of the news media: if it bleeds, it leads. To garner the national attention they needed in order to put pressure on President Lyndon Johnson to bring forward legislation against the sort of discrimination black voters faced in places like Selma, they needed to find city authorities that were brutal enough and stupid enough to attack and beat nonviolent protestors under the lenses of TV cameramen. In Sheriff Jim Clark, King and the SCLC had found their man.

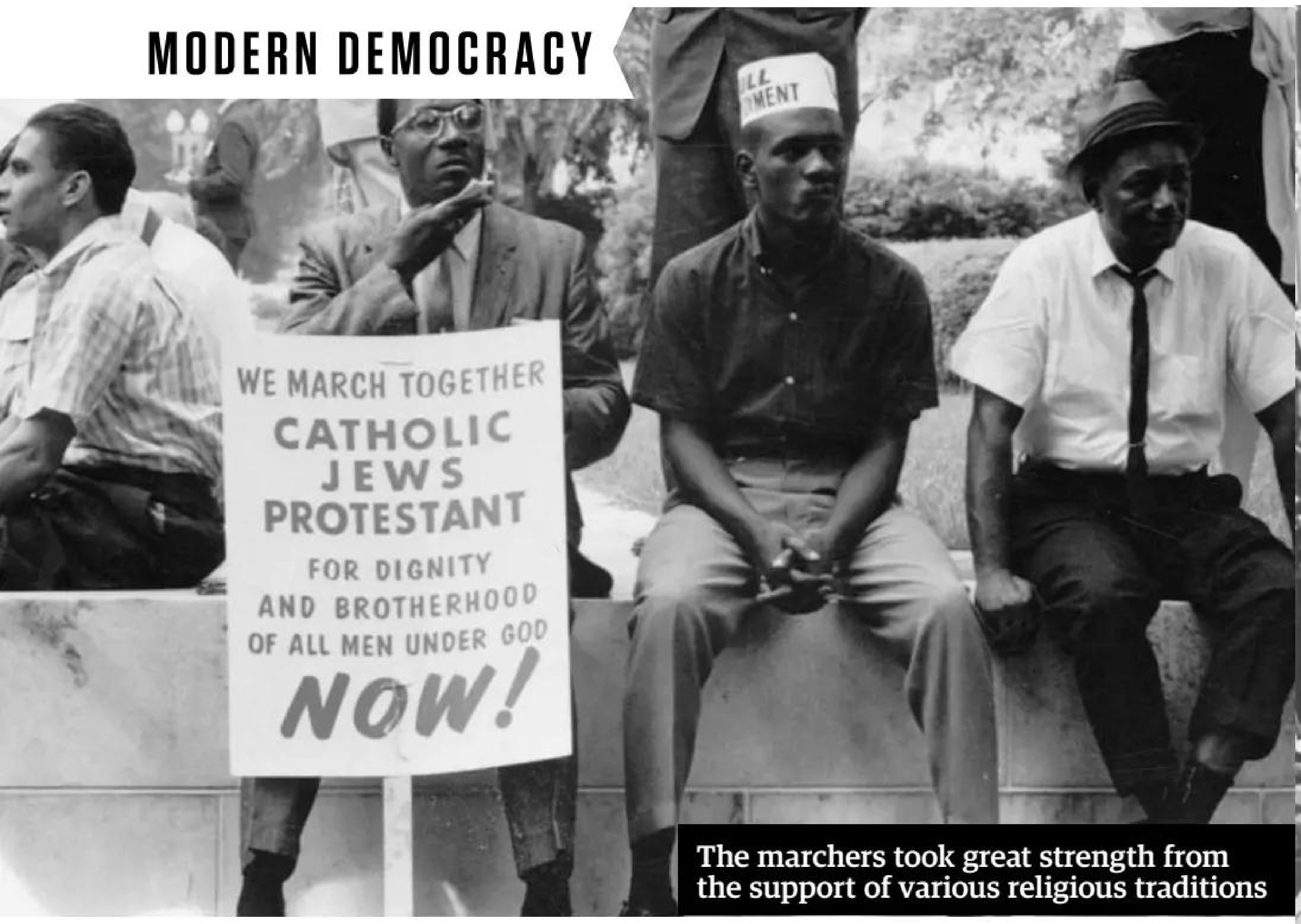
As the first stage in the campaign, Dr King, the SCLC and local activists organised mass voter registrations to highlight the invidious restrictions placed on black voters. Unable to suppress their violent bigotry, Sheriff Clark and his men responded brutally and over 3,000 people were arrested through January 1965, including Dr King. But despite a court ruling in favour of the civil rights protestors, by February Dr King could still say, in a letter to the *New York Times*, "This is Selma, Alabama. There are more Negroes in jail with me than there are on the voting rolls."

Then, on 18 February 1965, police broke up a protest in neighbouring Perry County. Trying to escape the Alabama state police, Jimmie Lee Jackson, a poor farm worker who was also a deacon in his church, took refuge in a café but the police followed him in and then shot him. Jackson managed to stagger out, but died eight days later from his wounds.

Jackson's death stoked emotions that were already running high. In order to stop the protests turning violent, SCLC organiser James Bevel proposed a march from Selma, the county seat, to Montgomery, the state capital, a distance of 80

Civil rights marches cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama

Alamy



The marchers took great strength from the support of various religious traditions

WE MARCH WIT
SELMA!
FREEDOM NOW CORE
FREEDOM NOW N.Y.C

"We March with Selma!": Protestors in New York carry banners in support of the Selma to Montgomery marchers

kilometres (50 miles), to present their grievances to the governor. Dr King was in Atlanta, so the march was led by the Reverend Hosea Williams along with student activist, John Lewis.

On Sunday 7 March, about 600 marchers set out from Selma and came to the Edmund Pettus Bridge over the Alabama River. The bridge has a central hump, so it was only when they crested the hump that the marchers realised that the police and state troopers were waiting for them on the other side. The governor of Alabama, George Wallace, had ordered that the march was to be prevented from reaching Montgomery by any means necessary: Sheriff Jim Clark needed no further encouragement. With his mounted posse, Clark charged into the marchers, beating them with clubs while police fired tear gas. Even when the protestors tried to retreat, the mounted police charged after them, still flailing with their clubs.

That evening, ABC, one of the national networks, stopped its programming to show viewers film of the brutality visited, by American lawmen, upon nonviolent protestors. The following day, the national press was covered with pictures of police beating women and men. Sheriff Jim Clark, too stupid to stop himself or his men, had fallen for the trap that had been set for him.

In response to the violence, Dr King called on local religious leaders to join him in a second march from Selma to Montgomery that would take place two days later, on Tuesday 9 March. But when Judge Frank Minis Johnson placed a temporary restraining order on the march, Dr King and the other protest leaders were faced with a dilemma. Judge Johnson had given many rulings in favour of black civil rights and it was thought that he would lift the order. In the end, Dr King led some 2,000 marchers to Edmund Pettus Bridge where they knelt and prayed, in sight of Alabama state troopers, before turning round and returning to Selma. As a result, the day became known as 'Turnaround Tuesday'.

But the protestors' nonviolence was again met by violence – that evening James Reeb, a white Unitarian Universalist minister who had joined in the march, was set on by segregationists and beaten badly. He died two days later from his injuries.

On 15 March, President Lyndon Johnson addressed a joint session of Congress, and the whole nation via television, saying, "Their cause must be our cause too. Because it is not just Negroes, but really it is all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice. And we shall overcome." Two days later, the president brought new legislation to ensure voting rights for black people before Congress. Meanwhile, Judge Johnson had lifted the restraining order against the marchers while also directing local law enforcement that they were not to harass the marchers.

On 21 March, the third march to Montgomery left Selma, protected by FBI agents. Among the marchers were Joe Young, a blind man from Georgia, and Jim Letherer from Michigan, who did the march on crutches. The marchers took four days to reach the state capital and the weather was often foul, but by the time they reached Montgomery the number of marchers had grown to 25,000. On their last night, as the marchers camped in the grounds of St Jude, a Catholic establishment on the outskirts of Montgomery, entertainers such

Defining moment

Freedom Day 7 Oct 1963

Around 400 black people arrive at Dallas County Courthouse to register to vote. Annie Lee Cooper is one of the people waiting in line. The registrars work as slowly as possible and take a very long lunch break. But Freedom Day marks the beginning of the struggle for the vote in Dallas County, and Alabama more generally.

Timeline

1963 1965

- **Start of the campaign**
Dr King begins the campaign. Some 700 black people come to a meeting at Brown Chapel despite a court injunction forbidding such gatherings.
2 January 1965
- **First attempts to register**
Dr King leads 300 marchers to the courthouse to attempt to register for the vote. Nobody manages to register.
18 January 1965
- **Further attempts to register**
This time, when people come to try to register, Sheriff Clark arrests them.
19 January 1965
- **Punching back**
Annie Lee Cooper, waiting to register, slugs Sheriff Clark when he pokes her with his club. She is arrested.
25 January 1965
- **Dr King arrested**
Leading a protest, Dr Martin Luther King is arrested and put into Selma jail.
1 February 1965
- **Political progress**
President Lyndon Johnson says he will urge legislation for voting rights to be considered by Congress.
6 February 1965
- **Death in the café**
Jimmie Lee Jackson, hiding from state troopers in a café, is shot in the stomach. He dies eight days later.
18 February 1965

Children lead the marchers into Montgomery towards the State Capitol building on the last day of the third march

Demonstrators lock arms in front of the Dallas County courthouse in Selma, Alabama. Sheriff Jim Clark had them all arrested

as Harry Belafonte and Nina Simone performed for the excited crowd. On the morrow, they knew they would be making history.

On 25 March, Dr King led the marchers through Montgomery. In response to reports of snipers waiting to shoot him, 15 black clergymen who looked like King walked abreast of him at the front of the procession. However, when the marchers reached the State Capitol building, Governor Wallace refused to see them. Dr King proceeded to address the marchers and, via television, the nation.

"Our aim must never be to defeat or humiliate the white man, but to win his friendship and understanding. We must come to see that the end we seek is a society at peace with itself, a society that can live with its conscience. And that will be a day not of the white man, not of the black man. That will be the day of man as man."

Less than six months later, on 6 August 1965, President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, with Dr King and other civil rights leaders by his side.

The woman who did not turn the other cheek

Cooper was played by Oprah Winfrey in the movie *Selma*

Based as it was in Christianity, the Civil Rights Movement enjoined its activists to practise nonviolence, to turn the other cheek as Jesus had told his disciples, and the movement's followers kept to this precept with astonishing self-discipline and courage. However, under the sorts of provocation people faced, tempers could snap, and no one's temper snapped more famously than that of Annie Lee Cooper. A Selma native, she had moved when young to Kentucky, before returning to Selma in 1962 to look after her mother. Cooper had registered to vote when she lived in Kentucky and Ohio, and she was determined to vote in Alabama too, but first she had to register. She tried often, to no avail. "Once," she said, "I stood in line from 7am to 4pm but never got to register." On 7 October 1963, activists organised a Freedom Day when 400 black people, the maximum allowed by the courts, waited outside Dallas County courthouse to register, and Annie Lee Cooper stood among them. She wasn't able to register, but when her employers saw her there, they fired her. On 25 January 1965, Annie Lee Cooper tried again, joining the queue of black people waiting outside Dallas County courthouse to register to vote. But this time, Sheriff Jim Clark turned up with his deputies. Clark ordered Cooper to leave, prodding her in the neck with his club, until Annie Lee Cooper finally let go of the principles of nonviolence, swung round and landed a sweet right hook on Clark's jaw, knocking him to the ground. Clark's deputies then waded in, pushing Cooper down and holding her there while the enraged Jim Clark beat her with his club. Annie Lee Cooper was arrested and held for 11 hours in jail: she sang spirituals during her imprisonment.

Defining moment

Bloody Sunday 7 March 1965

Not knowing what's waiting for them on the other side of Edmund Pettus Bridge, 600 marchers cross the Alabama River only to come face-to-face with Sheriff Jim Clark (left) and his deputies, mounted on horses, ready and spoiling for a fight. The police and state troopers attack the marchers, putting 16 in hospital and injuring at least 50 others. Pictures dominate the TV channels and newspapers.

Defining moment

March to Montgomery
25 March 1965

The third march from Selma to Montgomery finally reaches the intended destination and does so without injury or violence. Outside the State Capitol, Dr Martin Luther King Jr asks, rhetorically, how long black people will have to wait for their right to vote. The answer: "Not long, because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."

Court orders
The day after Bloody Sunday, Judge Frank Johnson, concerned for their safety, places a temporary injunction against further marches.
8 March 1965

Turnaround Tuesday
Dr King leads marchers to Edmund Pettus Bridge, prays there, then leads them back to Selma.
9 March 1965

Death of the minister
James Reeb, with three other ministers, is attacked by the Ku Klux Klan. Reeb dies from his injuries two days later. He was 38.
11 March 1965

On the road again
Marchers set out for the third time from Selma, heading to Montgomery, the state capital.
21 March 1965

Death in the night
Viola Liuzzo, a white Unitarian Universalist minister and mother of five who had come to Montgomery to help with the march, was shot by the Ku Klux Klan in her car.
25 March 1965

Alamy, Getty Images, Wikimedia Commons, Donzaleigh Abernathy, Library of Congress

Martin Luther King and his wife Coretta Scott King, along with other civil rights activists, lead the march from Selma to Montgomery on 25 March 1965

Getty Images

FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL

Eye Witness

ANDREAS RAMOS

Born in Colombia and raised in the USA, Ramos lived in West Germany for seven years before moving to Denmark. He's authored ten books, including a number of best-selling titles. He's also a lecturer in Digital Marketing at the Silicon Valley Business School. He remains an outspoken commentator on the fall of the Berlin Wall and hopes future generations will remember its importance.

> “As we made our way into West Germany we could all sense that the whole continent was about to change forever”

For 28 years, the Berlin Wall stood resolute, an imposing symbol of the Soviet Union's cast-iron hold over much of Eastern Europe. For almost three decades, the citizens of the Wall's Eastern side lived under the watchful eye of the German Democratic Republic, a semi-autonomous government laid in place by its Soviet masters in Moscow. Heavily guarded and laced with barbed wire, the 155-kilometre (96-mile)-long, 3.6-metre (11.8-foot)-high structure ensured the German capital remained divided through the fearful years of the Cold War. No East German was permitted to cross the border into the West; the sights and sounds of a free Berlin a few hundred yards away a constant reminder of how fractured Europe had become in the decades following the end of World War II. But as the 1980s drew to a close, this symbol of division became the breaking point in European socialism. Based in Denmark at the time, science and technology student Andreas Ramos travelled to Berlin to witness first-hand the frustrations of a continent boil over in the streets of a divided city.

“When I went to study at Heidelberg (in southwest Germany) in 1978 no one in government, academia or the general public could imagine the Berlin Wall would ever fall or the Soviet Union could collapse”, explains Ramos. “NATO was built on the premise of eternal conflict with the USSR. But by the mid-1980s, after the USSR's failure in Afghanistan, it was clear the Soviet Union had to change. But collapse? They simply hadn't planned for change. It all happened on the streets, not within the government. I was in Germany for seven years and then went to Denmark to work on a doctoral dissertation. I'd been to Berlin many times and had friends there. From the edge of the Wall we watched everything, and when the East Germans began to tear down the wall, we joined them.”

A month prior, the first metaphorical cracks in the Soviet Union's hold on Eastern Europe started to show. Communication between Moscow and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) government led by hardline party leader Erich Honecker had broken down as the Motherland struggled to contain its rapidly unravelling vision for a united socialist future. Up until this point, the borders of the Eastern Bloc remained intact, but the growing pressure from refugees attempting to flee the failing communist system became too much for the neighbouring Hungarian government to ignore. On 19 August 1989, Hungary effectively opened its physical borders and allowed over 13,000 East Germans to surge across the border into Austria. As the refugees sought sanctuary in the West German embassy, it sent a shock wave through the infrastructure of the Eastern Bloc. A wave that would reach all the way to Berlin and beyond.

Back in the capital, the streets were more alive than ever. A previously morose and subdued city was now bustling as its citizens took up arms in peaceful protests. East Berliners could sense the government was starting to unravel. The resignation of Erich Honecker, the staunch idealist who had stated only months before that the Berlin Wall would stand tall for a century to come, had galvanised the nation's hope for change. The

DEFINING MOMENT

FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL,
9 NOVEMBER 1989

A symbol of division in Europe, the Berlin Wall's fall united a city and led to the end of the Soviet Union's hold over the Eastern Bloc.

East Germans gathered at the Berlin Wall in November 1989, with sledges and axes to tear it down

Alamy, Andreas Ramos

Timeline of a nation uniting

CST

19 August 1989 — **Prior to the Wall's physical collapse, the political landscape regarding it is already falling apart. The opening of Hungary's borders with Austria can be seen as the initial catalyst.**

4 September — **Peaceful protest**
Following a similar influx of refugees into a now-open Czechoslovakia, a series of peaceful protests are organised across East Berlin.

18 October — **East German leader Erick Honecker is forced to resign by his own party following his refusal to change the city's immigration policies.**

4 November — **We are the people**
With Erick Honecker and his 'shoot to kill' edict removed, the Peaceful Revolution of 1989 reaches its height. The chant, "We are the people!" echoes through the streets of East German cities.

9.30am 9 November — **Crowds begin to gather all along the Berlin Wall as rumours of a policy change run amok.**

1.00pm — **The GDR holds a press conference where it announces all GDR citizens are permitted to cross over to West Berlin.**

5.05pm — **The first few East Berliners make their way into the West as guards quickly lose control of the situation.**

8.00pm — **Media announcement**
Huge crowds gather at the Berlin Wall, hacking it to pieces as the media televises the scenes around the world.

22 December — **Despite multiple breaches in the Wall, the Brandenburg Gate is officially opened for all Berliners to pass through.**

3 October 1990 — **With the Wall itself almost completely demolished, East and West Germany are united in a formal ceremony. The US, British and French governments relinquish stewardship of West Berlin into the hands of a new united and democratic German government.**

Regardless of age, class or background, chipping away at the 28 year-old Wall was a symbolic action that united a nation

With the sun still high in the sky, citizens from both East and West Berlin clamber on top of the Wall

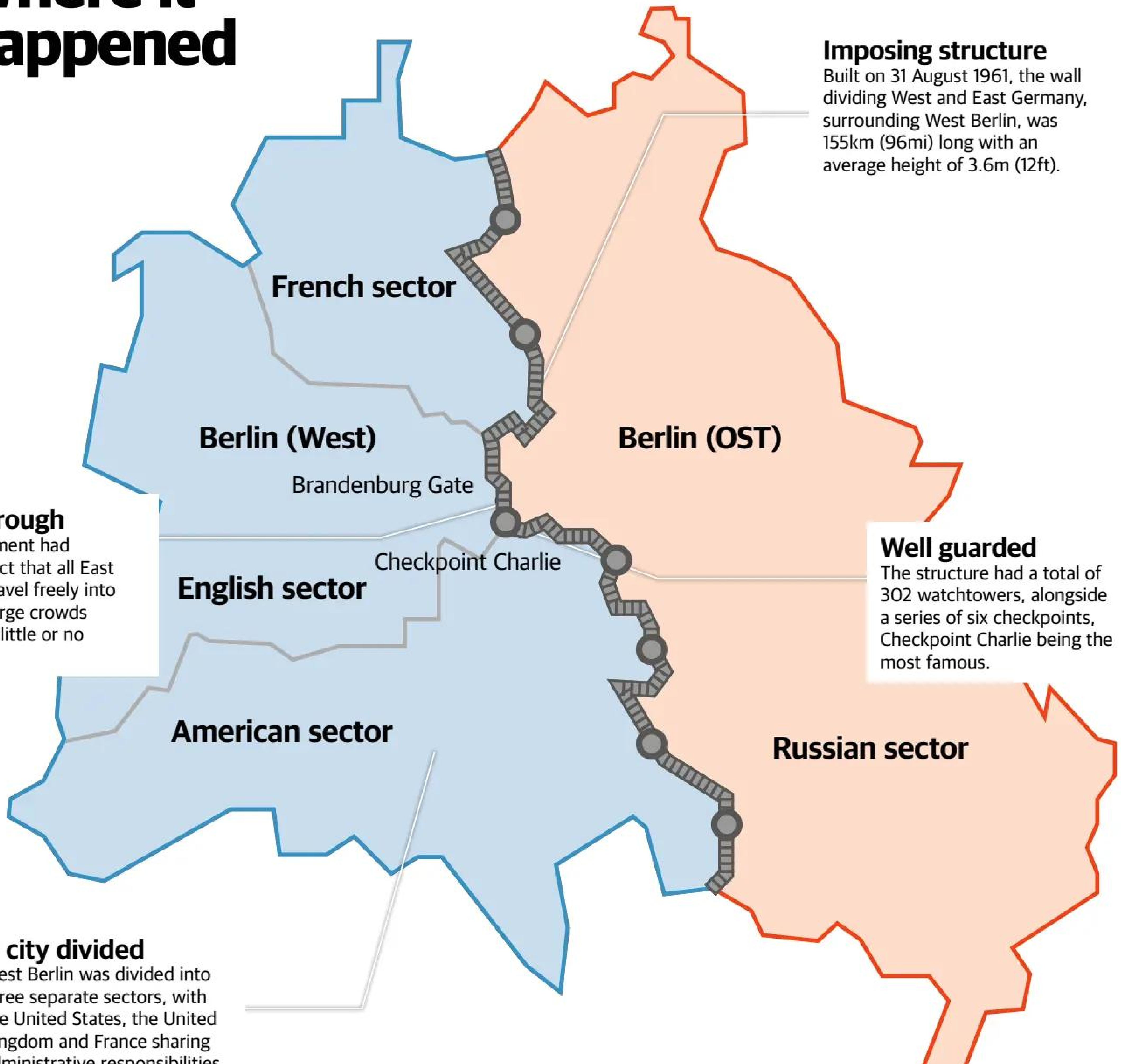
'Peaceful Revolution', as it came to be known, reached its height on 4 November 1989, an event that attracted Ramos and many others to Berlin. Arriving on the afternoon of 9 November, Ramos could sense an air of tension, but also one of burgeoning hope. "The build-up wasn't just in Germany; it was the whole year of revolutions across Eastern Europe. The Soviet Bloc was disintegrating, one nation after another", comments Ramos. "As we made our way into West Germany we could all sense that the whole continent was about to change forever."

That evening the inevitable finally became a reality. In the weeks since Honecker's forced resignation, his successors had attempted to rejuvenate the party's reputation by holding a series of press conferences that promised radical changes to national policies. Shortly before that day's official press conference, GDR's official and unofficial spokesman Günter Schabowski was handed a small note that confirmed all East Berliners were now allowed to cross the border into the West with the proper identification. However, without any other explanation to help him digest this news, Schabowski was thrust in front of a ravenous media. One garbled and mostly improvised statement later and it was official: the once impenetrable gates of East Germany were opening. The problem was, this news wasn't communicated down to the guards and officials manning the many guard posts along the wall. With frustration building among the crowds of East Berliners, the situation was a powder keg waiting to explode.

As the news started to flood across East Berlin, hundreds of people began to gather at each checkpoint demanding to let through into West Berlin. To Colombian-born Ramos, it was utter chaos, but it was chaos charged by hope rather than anger. "It was November and it was extremely cold that night, but in the excitement everyone was milling around in anticipation. Restaurants and bars, which by law were meant to close, were all open well into the early hours. Laws became meaningless that night," he recalls. "People came from all over Europe: we spoke in many languages. There were British, French, Spaniards, Italians, Greeks and many Scandinavians, plus, of course, the Germans. That night, Berlin was Europe. Remember; at the time, there were no cell phones, no video, no Twitter, no Facebook, no selfies, so remarkably, there aren't that many photos of that night. Today, of course, there would be billions of photos."

As Ramos and his friends approached the Wall itself, the air seemed alight with a mixture of confusion, frustration and apprehension. "As the news of the law changing spread it became a massive sense of relief, of 'it's over', of excitement. After decades of baseless promises from politicians and pointless dreams of uniting families, it suddenly became possible in a delirious joy", he says. "Someone wrote it was the world's largest street party, and it was. 5 million people in one city. East Germans flooded across the borders and went visiting throughout all of Germany. The cities declared free bus and streetcar tickets for them, free museums

Where it happened



Imposing structure
Built on 31 August 1961, the wall dividing West and East Germany, surrounding West Berlin, was 155km (96mi) long with an average height of 3.6m (12ft).

Breaking through
Once the government had broadcast the edict that all East Berliners could travel freely into West Germany, large crowds passed over with little or no identity checks.

Well guarded
The structure had a total of 302 watchtowers, alongside a series of six checkpoints, Checkpoint Charlie being the most famous.

A city divided
West Berlin was divided into three separate sectors, with the United States, the United Kingdom and France sharing administrative responsibilities between them.

> "From the edge of the Wall we watched everything, and when the East Germans began to tear down the wall, we joined them"

and zoos, free everything for the visiting East Germans. It was an incredible time."

The Wall was suddenly no longer the impenetrable barrier to another world. East Berliners were flooding into the other side of the city while others started attacking the wall with any tool they could find. The military looked on dumbfounded. Some of them even joined in the demolition job. "It was clear that both governments, East and West German, plus the US military, had lost control", comments Ramos. "They stood by helplessly, watching everyone bustle around. I talked with East German soldiers who told me their rifles were empty. No bullets. They looked forward to coming across the border. West German police, who are always so orderly and authoritative, just watched. They didn't know what to do; this had never been planned." He adds, "many of us pushed through the wall and went to the East Berlin side. It was mutual: West Germans and East Germans tore down the wall together to unite themselves once more."

Breaking down the wall itself was no easy task, but it became a cathartic coming together of a nation suddenly reunited in a matter of hours. Citizens from East and West gathered on each side to start hacking away, pulling away chunks like mementos from a fun day out. Ramos himself was right in the middle of the crowds tearing into the wall that evening. "Opening the Wall went on for hours", he remarks. "It was made of thick slabs of concrete, nine or twelve feet (three or four metres) high. Small holes were made with hammers, but to open the wall so large numbers of people could pass, industrial machinery was needed. Somehow, West German construction companies showed up with jackhammers and cranes which broke apart the slabs and lifted them out of the way."

In the following months, Germany was unified as a single, free nation for the first time since WWII and Europe – and the world – was changed forever. Germany would go on to become an economic superpower, but that chilly evening in Berlin has remained an iconic image of social and political upheaval. "It was one of the most astonishing events of my life. It was 25 years ago and I still remember so many moments, especially the mood", recalls Ramos on that historic day. "The fall of the Berlin Wall ended a chapter of European history reaching back more than a hundred years. However, it also opened a new chapter, and so far, we don't yet know what it's going to be or where it's going to lead."

Origins and aftermath

Following the end of World War II in 1945, Germany was split into four distinct zones, with each one administered by each of the main Allied forces. Berlin itself was divided in two, with West Berlin existing as a free city and East Berlin absorbed into the increasing Soviet grip on Eastern Europe. In 1961, the semi-autonomous communist government the German Democratic Republic – under direction from the Kremlin – decreed that a new wall would be erected to physically divide the city in two, effectively cutting East Berliners off from the rest of the Western world. For 28 years, the Berlin Wall signified a city evolving in two very different directions. When the first East Berlin citizens passed the guard patrols into the free West Berlin, it was the start of the breaking up of the Eastern Bloc and the first steps toward a unified Germany that would see it become one of the most robust economic powers in Europe.

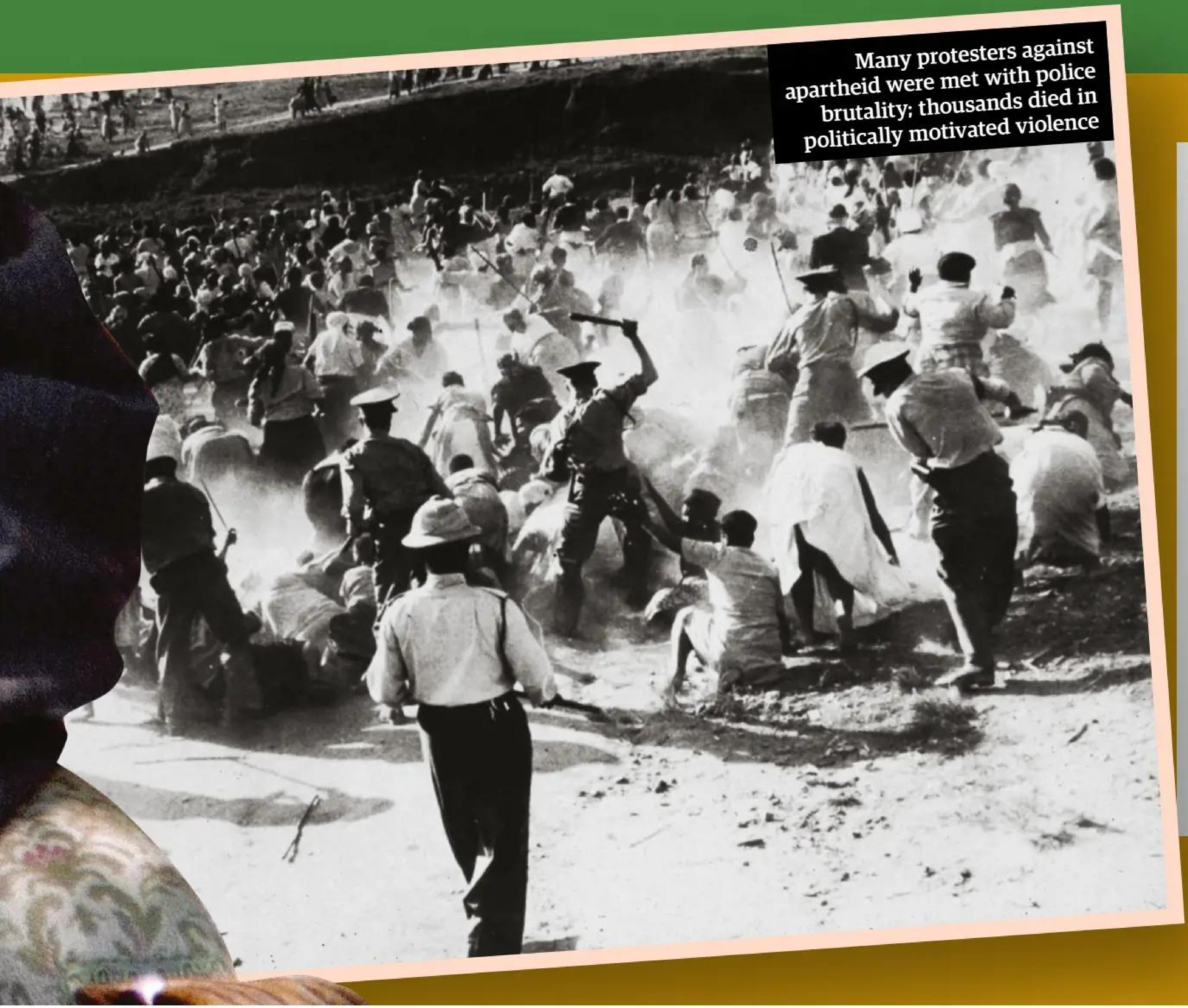
Alamy, Manfred & Barbara Aulbach, Wikimedia Commons

From freedom fighter to president: Nelson Mandela remains a symbol for freedom and equality

MANDELA AND THE LONG WALK TO DEMOCRACY

Nelson Mandela was a driver, creator and symbol of democracy for South Africa, but his battle to bring equality cost him his freedom

Written by June Woolerton



Many protesters against apartheid were met with police brutality; thousands died in politically motivated violence

On 20 April 1964, Nelson Mandela took the stand in his trial for sabotage. He told the court, "I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Although the death penalty was a distinct possibility, Mandela was sentenced to life in prison after his conviction. He spent 27 years behind bars before his release led to a new phase in his political career, which saw his dream of a democratic society realised.

By the time of the Rivonia Trial, named after the place where some of his co-defendants had been arrested, Mandela was one of the leading opponents of the apartheid system, which had deprived the black population of South Africa of civil and political rights. It seemed democracy was a privilege for white people only.

Getty Images

Apartheid was formally introduced into law in 1948 when the National Party came to power on a pledge to increase racial segregation. However, the far larger black population of South Africa hadn't been allowed to vote in that poll. Apartheid, from the Afrikaans word for separateness, had been a part of life for centuries. By 1948, Mandela had already joined the African National Congress (ANC), established in 1912 to fight for the rights of black South Africans.

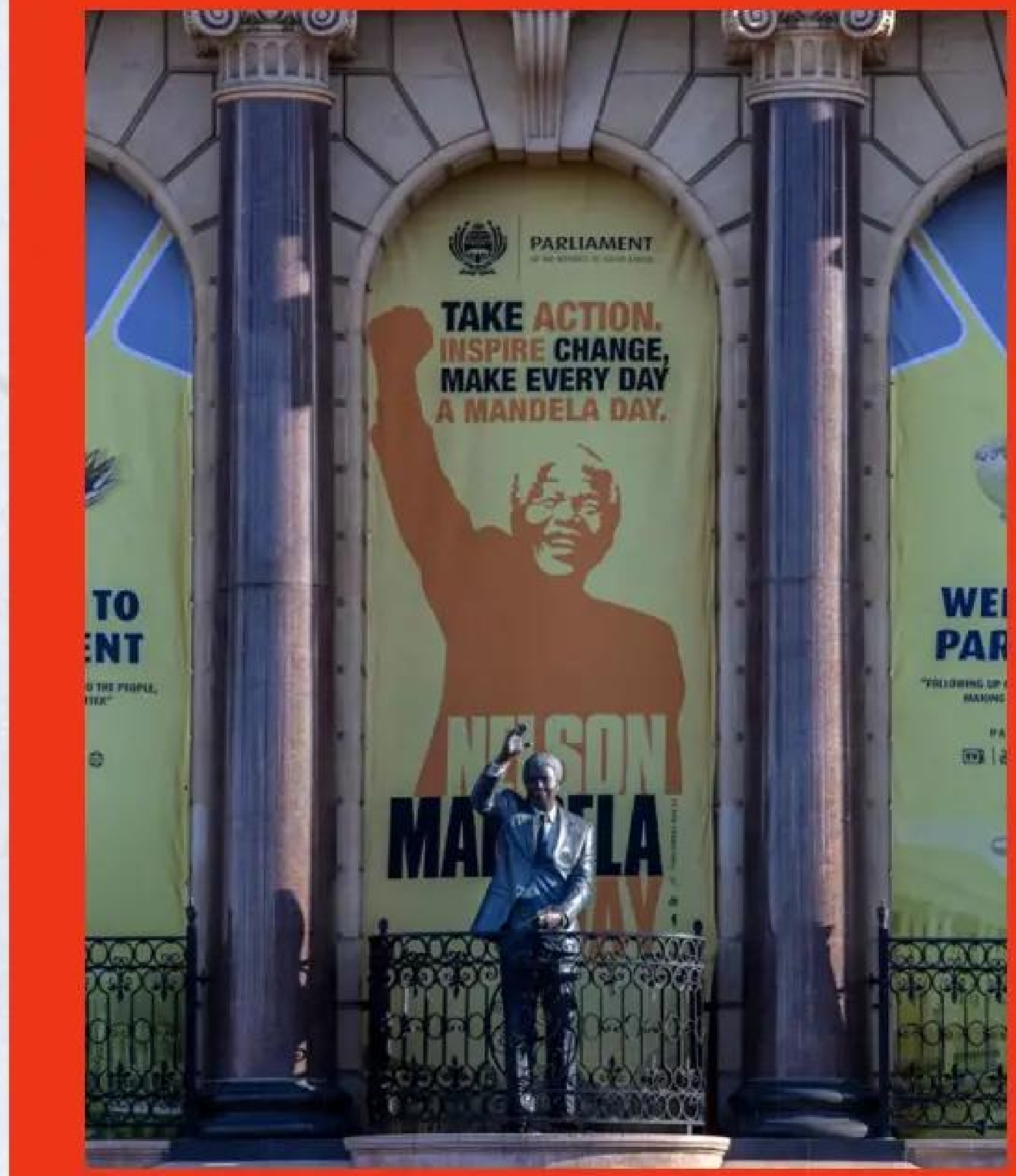
Apartheid laws forced black people to live in segregated areas, with millions removed from their homes in the implementation. Employment and education opportunities were drastically reduced and mixed marriages were banned. Racial classification was introduced while passing laws, forcing black people to carry identity documents, increased. The legislation only served to enforce and worsen the prevailing racism that had already impacted millions of lives.

There was no chance to change this at the ballot box as black people were barred from voting. In 1960, a protest against pass laws in Sharpeville ended with the police opening fire on demonstrators, leaving 69 dead. The National Party declared a state of emergency and arrested 11,000 people, including Mandela. It banned the ANC as well as its splinter group, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), which had organised the protest.

While ANC leader, Albert Luthuli, maintained resistance must remain peaceful, the Sharpeville massacre convinced Mandela that the time had come to pick up arms. He left South Africa to gain support for the newly formed paramilitary wing of the ANC, uMkhonto weSizwe (MK) but was arrested soon after his return in the summer of 1962.

Plans for armed resistance continued but in July 1963, leading members of MK were detained at a farm in Rivonia, near Johannesburg. The material found on them also implicated Mandela. As they began their life sentences, the resistance struggled to maintain momentum.

The 1994 general election was the first time South Africans of all races could vote, with Mandela's ANC party winning a decisive victory



MANDELA DAY: AN INTERNATIONAL EFFORT TO CONTINUE A LEGACY

Nelson Mandela became a global symbol of freedom and was recognised with accolades, including the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2009, his birthday on 18 July, was marked by a Nelson Mandela Day to support peace and reconciliation. Later that year, the United Nations declared the date as Nelson Mandela International Day.

After his death in 2013, it became a way to honour his legacy. The focus is on positive impact in local communities, with the Nelson Mandela Foundation suggesting starting with 67 minutes of action to mirror Mandela's 67 years fighting for equality.

Recent years have seen a focus on new forms of inequity, including health and climate poverty, both seen as potential threats to the democracy that Mandela dedicated his life to achieve.

However, their imprisonment, and particularly Mandela's detention, spurred international opposition to apartheid and pressure for democratic rights for South Africa's black population. In 1964, the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) organised a conference on sanctions in London but persuading Western governments to withdraw investment in the country proved hard.

In 1976, black students in Soweto protested against laws that imposed Afrikaans, a language many pupils and teachers didn't use, on lessons. Police shot at them with the official death toll put at 176. The MK began to strengthen, as did international pressure against apartheid.

In 1985, Mandela turned down an offer of freedom. It depended on him renouncing armed struggle, something he still saw as key to bringing about full democracy. He did, however, leave jail briefly for secret talks as South Africa's government realised the country was unravelling.

FW de Klerk of the National Party, who believed South Africa needed a new constitution, was elected president in 1989. In February 1990, he shocked South Africa by unbanning parties, including the ANC, and announcing political prisoners would be freed imminently.

Mandela left Victor Verster Prison on 11 February 1990 before a global audience. Just a few hours after his release, he spoke of his desire to bring about peace and voting rights for the black population. The fight for democracy immediately entered a new phase of intense negotiations.

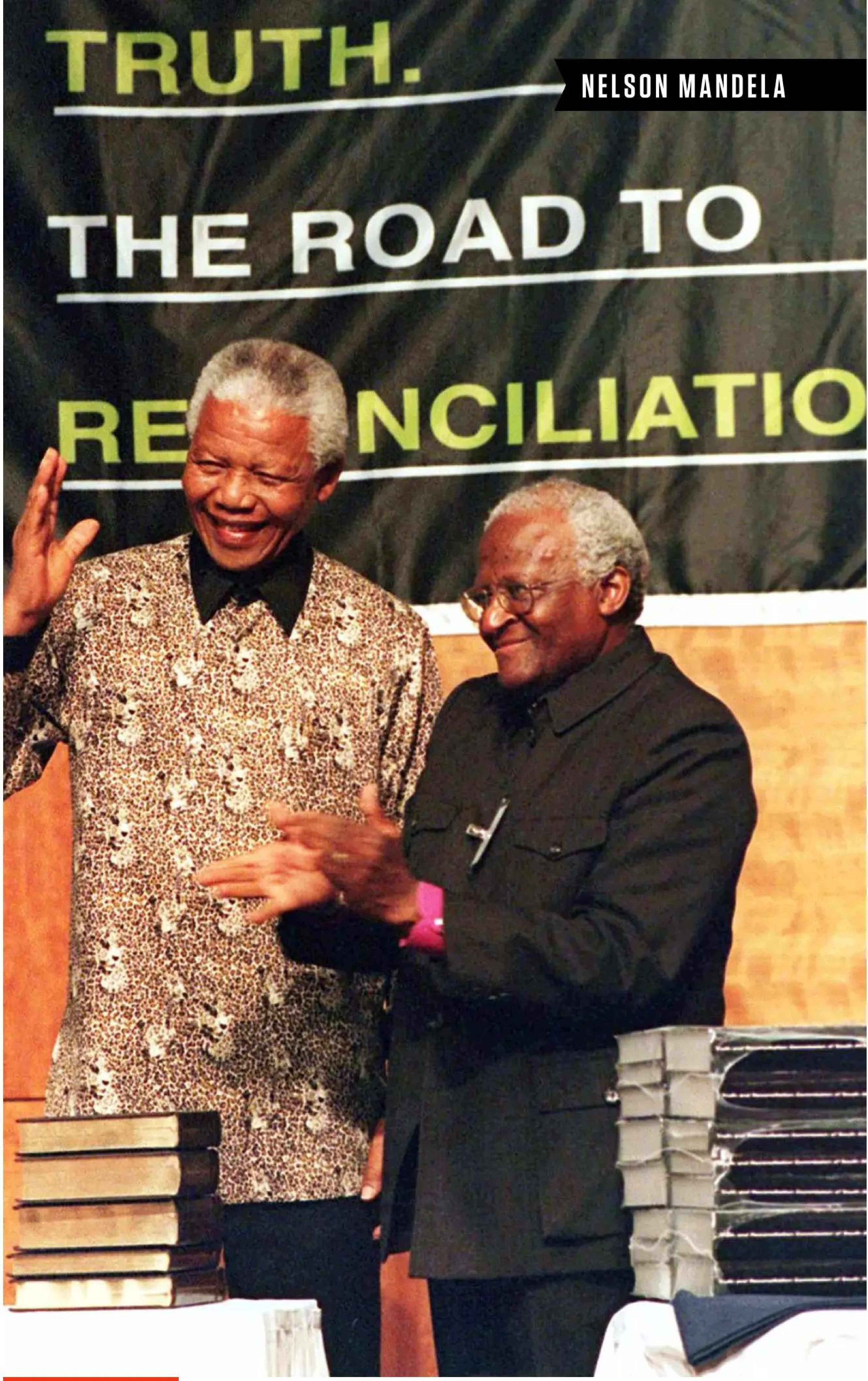
Mandela became ANC president in 1991 and signed a peace accord that year with de Klerk, although violence increased. Talks between the sides stalled repeatedly and distrust arose. An interim constitution, guaranteeing a multi-party democracy and universal suffrage, was agreed in 1993.

On 27 April 1994, long queues formed at polling stations as, for the first time, black South Africans could vote in democratic elections. The ANC won with 62 per cent of the vote and formed a government of national unity. Mandela had become the country's first black president.

The move to full democracy saw lengthy negotiations around a new constitution. In 1996, one that enshrined equal rights for all was agreed. Mandela signed it into law at Sharpeville. The same year, he instigated the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which detailed human rights violations that took place under apartheid in the words of victims, and worked towards restorative justice through interlocution with the perpetrators.

When the new democracy hosted the Rugby World Cup in 1995, a home win gave a boost to unity. Mandela chose to present the trophy in a shirt bearing the name of the Afrikaans captain, Francois Pienaar, a significant moment that bolstered the country around the world. Even after standing down as president in the 1998 elections, Mandela remained a key figure in its transition to equality. He had once pledged to die to achieve democracy but instead, his long life became central to its implementation.

FOR JOBS,
AND FREEDOM.
ANC
ANC
ANC



Above: The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was chaired by Desmond Tutu, and sought to help South Africa acknowledge the mistakes of the past

Getty Images

THE ARAB SPRING

How citizens across North Africa and the Middle East rose up to demand more democratic rights

Written by Catherine Curzon

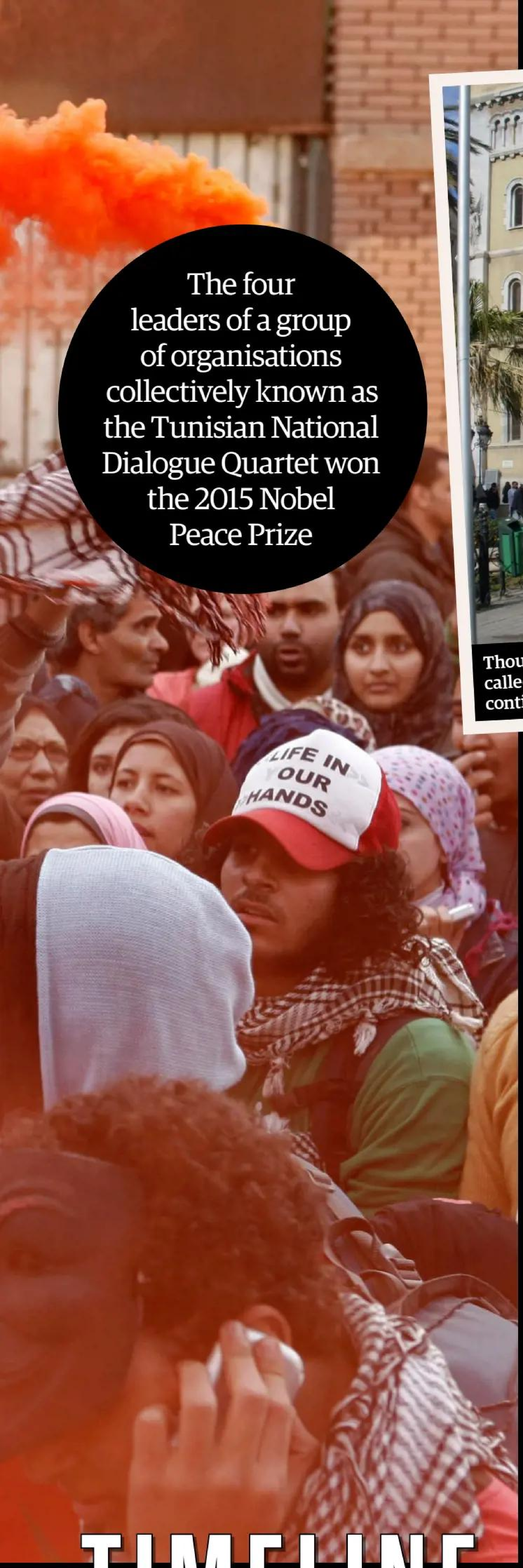
On 16 December 2010, Tunisian street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi's wares were seized by officials, the latest incident in what his family and friends claimed was a campaign of harassment and mistreatment. Humiliated, angry and with his living snatched away from him, Bouazizi attempted to lodge a formal complaint with the Governor of the city of Sidi Bouzid, who refused to meet with him. In protest, the desperate Bouazizi doused himself with petrol and lit a match. He died three weeks later in hospital.

As news spread of what had occurred, protests broke out around Tunisia and snowballed into a revolution. The protesters called for freedom of speech, the right to political freedom and an end to soaring unemployment and political corruption. Security forces hit back hard, killing and wounding demonstrators, but their protests only grew louder. Less than two weeks after Bouazizi's death, the Tunisian government collapsed and President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled into exile in Saudi Arabia. Across the Middle East, the Arab Spring had begun.

The impact of what became the 'Jasmine Revolution' in Tunisia spread across the region, and major pro-democracy uprisings broke out that resulted in wholesale changes of government in countries such as Egypt and Libya. With the wave of protests sweeping across Yemen, Syria, Bahrain and other countries, security forces took a hardline approach to dealing with them and lives were lost.

Although hopes were high for a new move towards democracy in the wake of the Arab Spring, the reality was not so cut and dried. Though conditions improved in Tunisia, this wasn't always the case, and the resultant power vacuums left by ousted leaders in countries such as Libya plunged those lands into civil war, with the people still suffering to this day.

With the struggle for democracy ongoing in the region, the effects of the Arab Spring have not been as positive as those initial protestors might have hoped.



The four leaders of a group of organisations collectively known as the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet won the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize

Though the Tunisian government called in the military, the people continued to call for democratic rule

Faced with massive protests in central Cairo, Egypt's president had no choice but to resign

Who was involved?

PLACE MOHAMED BOUAZIZI

Mohamed Bouazizi

1984 - 2011

When officials roughly confiscated the vegetables he sold on the street, Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in protest against his treatment.

Zine El Abidine Ben Ali

1936 - present

The Jasmine Revolution forced President Ben Ali to flee Tunisia and go into exile after 23 years at the top.

Muammar al-Gaddafi

1942 - 2011

The ousting of Colonel Gaddafi, after four decades in power in Libya, was a sure sign of the Arab Spring's impact.

TIMELINE

The fire is lit

17 December 2010

Mohamed Bouazizi sets himself alight to protest his treatment by officials. As news spreads of his actions, pro-democracy protests break out across Tunisia.

Ben Ali
Dégage

Ben Ali ousted

14 January 2011

With all efforts to put down the Jasmine Revolution thwarted, Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali flees into exile in Saudi Arabia.

Beyond borders

February 2011

Pro-democracy protests are held across the Middle East on the so-called Days of Rage, including in Iraq, Yemen, Egypt and Palestine.

Mubarak down

11 February 2011

After using every means possible to crush protests against his rule, Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak stands down after three decades in power.

GADDAFI IS A BUTCHER

Gaddafi killed

20 October 2011

Having greeted Arab Spring protesters with gunfire, Libyan president Muammar Gaddafi is forced to flee. He is killed while being captured.

People's vote

23 October 2011

The first democratic elections since 1956 are held in Tunisia, with voter turnout at around 90%. The first local elections follow seven years later.

Getty Images, Wikimedia Commons

FAKE
NEWS
SHARE

Getty Images, Alamy

DEMOCRACY UNDER THREAT

In 2024, democracy is seen as the ideal and perhaps only tolerable political system in the Western world but despite its apparent foothold, there are threats to its continuation

Written by June Woolerton

FAKE NEWS: THE JOKE THAT'S NO LONGER FUNNY

Donald Trump popularised the term 'fake news' during his presidency

One of Donald Trump's key phrases in his first years as US president was 'fake news', which he used to describe negative media stories, even creating awards for material he said misrepresented him. In 2021, after the Capitol Hill riots in the wake of his defeat to Joe Biden, he was banned from Twitter, accused of spreading misleading information - his own fake news. By 2024, when he ran for president once again, the phrase had acquired a far more sinister meaning and in many cases, was seen as a threat to democracy itself.

Propaganda has been part of elections since they began but the growth of online news and social media platforms in the 2010s and 2020s gave it a greater reach than ever before in the age of democracy. Every election is now scrutinised for 'fake news' but its impact continues to grow.

Its actual definition can include misinformation, which is incorrect material spread unknowingly, and disinformation, where falsehoods are passed on deliberately. This has been used to try and influence election processes with maliciously false material being distributed online and passed on by those who believe it to be real. In 2022, a report by UK press regulator, Ofcom, found that 30 per cent of adults were unaware that online material might be fake.

Social media algorithms produce 'echo chambers' where users are offered material that matches things they've already interacted with. They see what they want to see, reinforcing political opinions already held. It makes them easier to target with material designed to make them vote in a particular way.

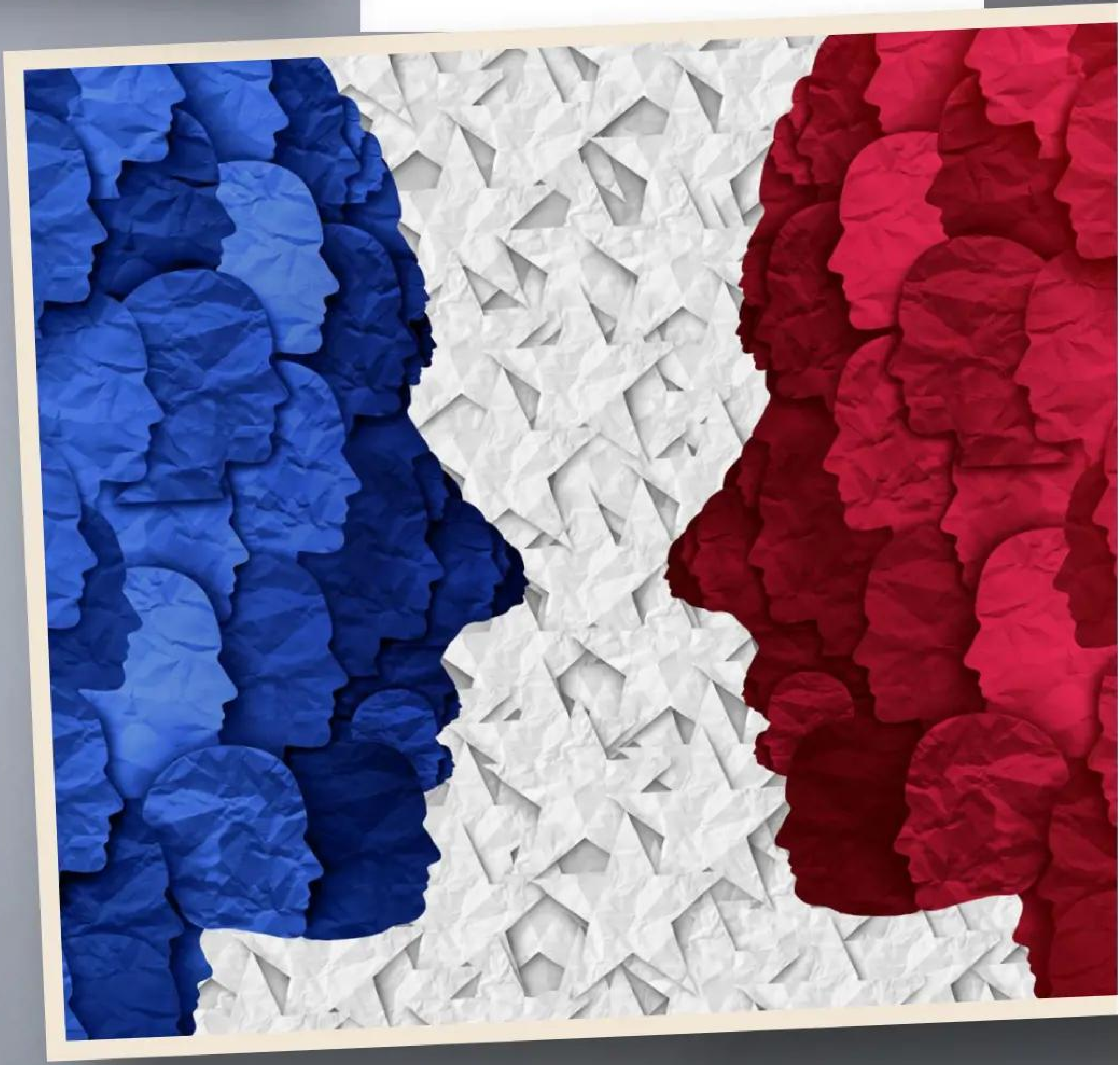
In 2024, with crucial elections in the UK and the US, political parties made more use than ever before of social media to reach voters. Fake news is no longer a joke - it's another loud voice but one that wants to shout down democracy.

POLAR OPPOSITES DON'T ATTRACT

Political polarisation has become more commonplace in democracies in the 21st century. While Tony Blair's New Labour won decisive victories by moving towards the centre ground of their political opponents, the tendency of the past two decades in major democracies has been the opposite, as polarisation grows.

US politics has become more and more polarised. Donald Trump's domination of the Republican Party and an increasingly left-wing Democratic Party has led to major issues, such as immigration, being debated in emotional terms. This leaves less room for policy detail or logical thinking.

Fragmented agendas have also led to a rise in fragmented voting. In the UK's 2024 general election, millions of voters were drawn away from the main parties towards the Reform UK party (which campaigned around immigration), as well as independent candidates who put the war in Gaza at the top of their agenda. Such issues have dominated the 2024 election season, but the results reflect how a growing focus on global issues has led to extreme views winning power in democracies.



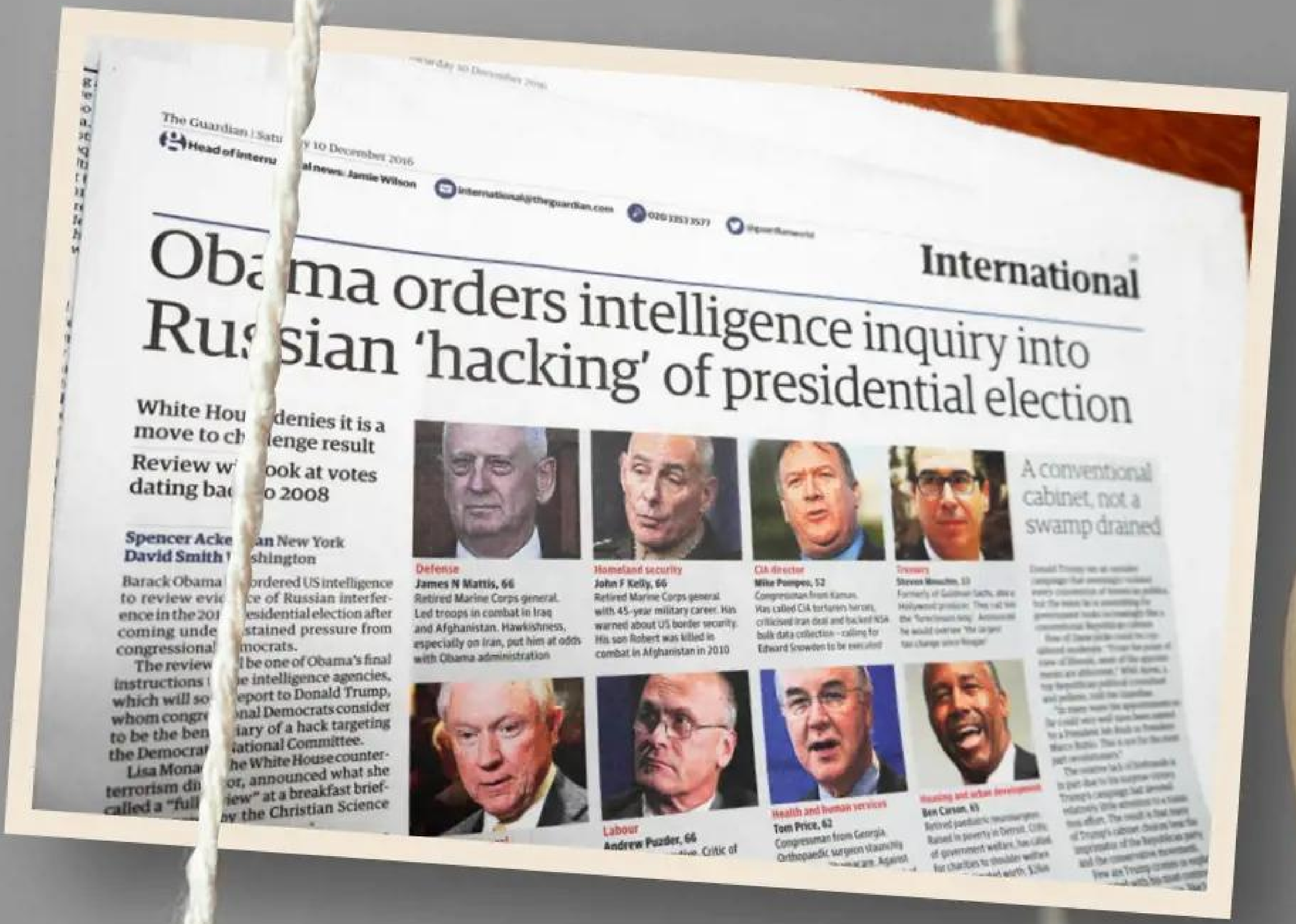
OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE

One of the main concerns around fake news, disinformation and artificial intelligence is how these threats could be used by outside states to influence democratic processes, particularly voting patterns. Foreign interference in elections is a long-standing danger to democracy, but the rise of new technologies has accelerated it.

In 2016, the US election was hit by a Russian operation that saw emails from the Democratic Party and the team of its candidate, Hillary Clinton, leaked. She claimed this had been done to bolster the election chances of Donald Trump. Within months, those working for the election of Emmanuel Macron as President of France claimed they had been targeted by Russian hackers and by an operation to spread false information about the En Marche candidate.

The potential to impact who is chosen to run democracies has increased as algorithms for social media prioritise material that appears to chime with what users have already viewed. Sophisticated campaigns to produce fake news that appeals to core demographics of potentially powerful voters is a growing tactic. Social media sites are often running to catch up, as videos can be shared millions of times in one day.

The year 2024 was a historic one for elections, with so many high-profile ballots taking place around the world. In the US, Donald Trump has already claimed Iran has hacked his campaign to return to the White House. The lack of authority around many social media accounts and the ease with which a credible-looking news site can be created, means the opportunity for outside states to spread information in the hope of influencing voters is a wide one.



The Guardian | Satu y 10 December 2016

Head of Interna al news: Jamie Wilson

International

Oba ma orders intelligence inquiry into Rus sian 'hacking' of presidential election

White Hou denies it is a move to ch lenge result

Review wi ook at votes dating ba o 2008

Spencer Acke an New York
David Smith W shington

Barack Obama ordered US intelligence to review evi ce of Russian interference in the 201 esidential election after coming unde stained pressure from congressional mocrats.

The review l be one of Obama's final instructions e intelligence agencies, which will so eport to Donald Trump, whom congre nal Democrats consider to be the ben iary of a hack targeting the Democrat National Committee.

Lisa Mona he White House counterterrorism di or, announced what she called a "full iew" at a breakfast brief- by the Christian Science

Defense
James N Mattis, 66
Retired Marine Corps general. Led troops in combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. Hawkishness, especially on Iran, put him at odds with Obama administration

Homeland security
John F Kelly, 66
Retired Marine Corps general with 45-year military career. Has warned about US border security. His son Robert was killed in combat in Afghanistan in 2010

CIA director
Mike Pompeo, 52
Congressman from Kansas. Has called CIA torturers heroes, criticised Iran deal and backed NSA bulk data collection – calling for Edward Snowden to be executed

A conventional cabinet, not a swamp drained

Labour
Andrew Puzder, 66

Health and human services
Tom Price, 62
Congressman from Georgia. Orthopaedic surgeon staunchly

Housing and urban development
Ben Carson, 65

Left: A federal investigation revealed the extent of Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential elections

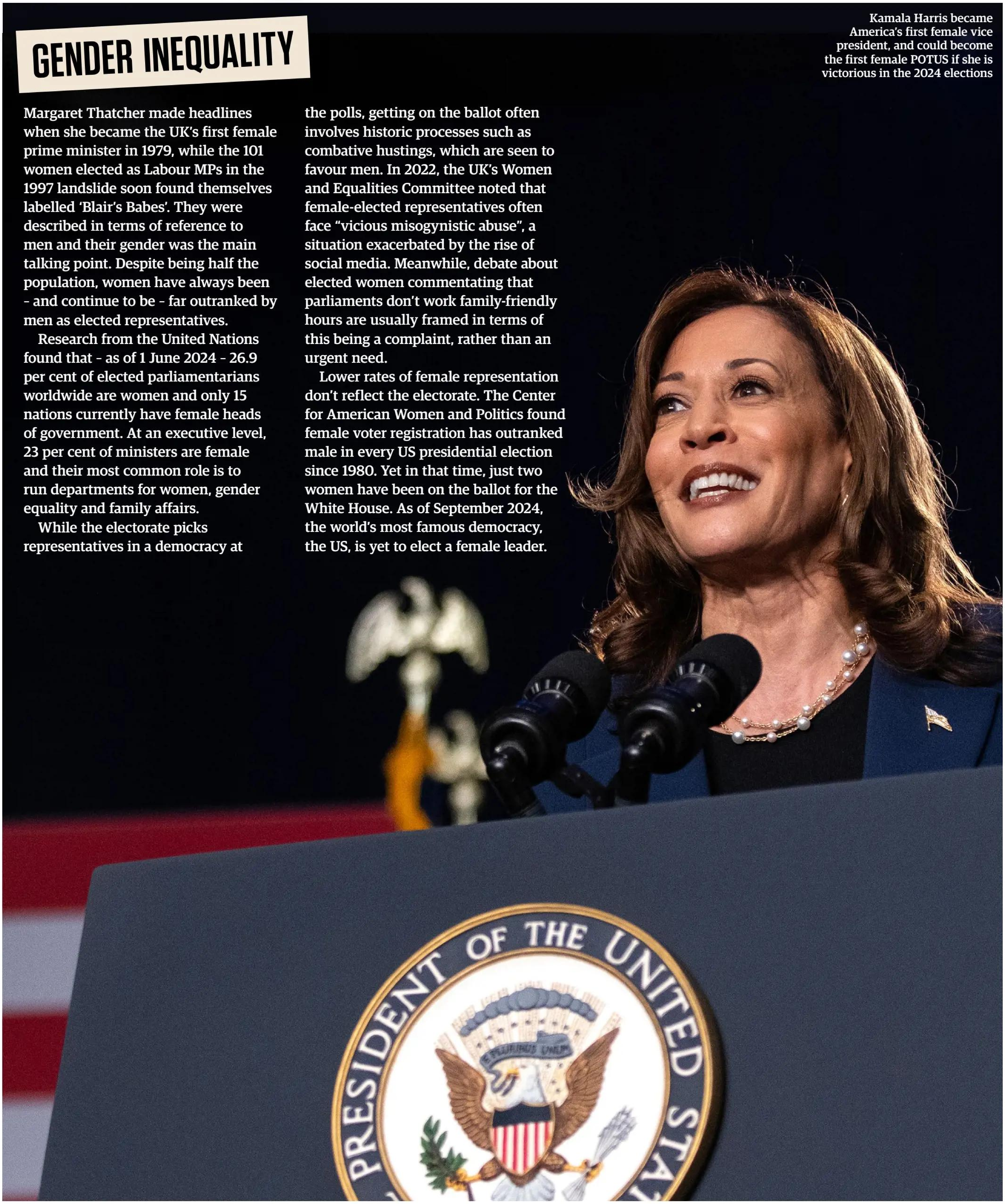
GENDER INEQUALITY

Margaret Thatcher made headlines when she became the UK's first female prime minister in 1979, while the 101 women elected as Labour MPs in the 1997 landslide soon found themselves labelled 'Blair's Babes'. They were described in terms of reference to men and their gender was the main talking point. Despite being half the population, women have always been - and continue to be - far outranked by men as elected representatives.

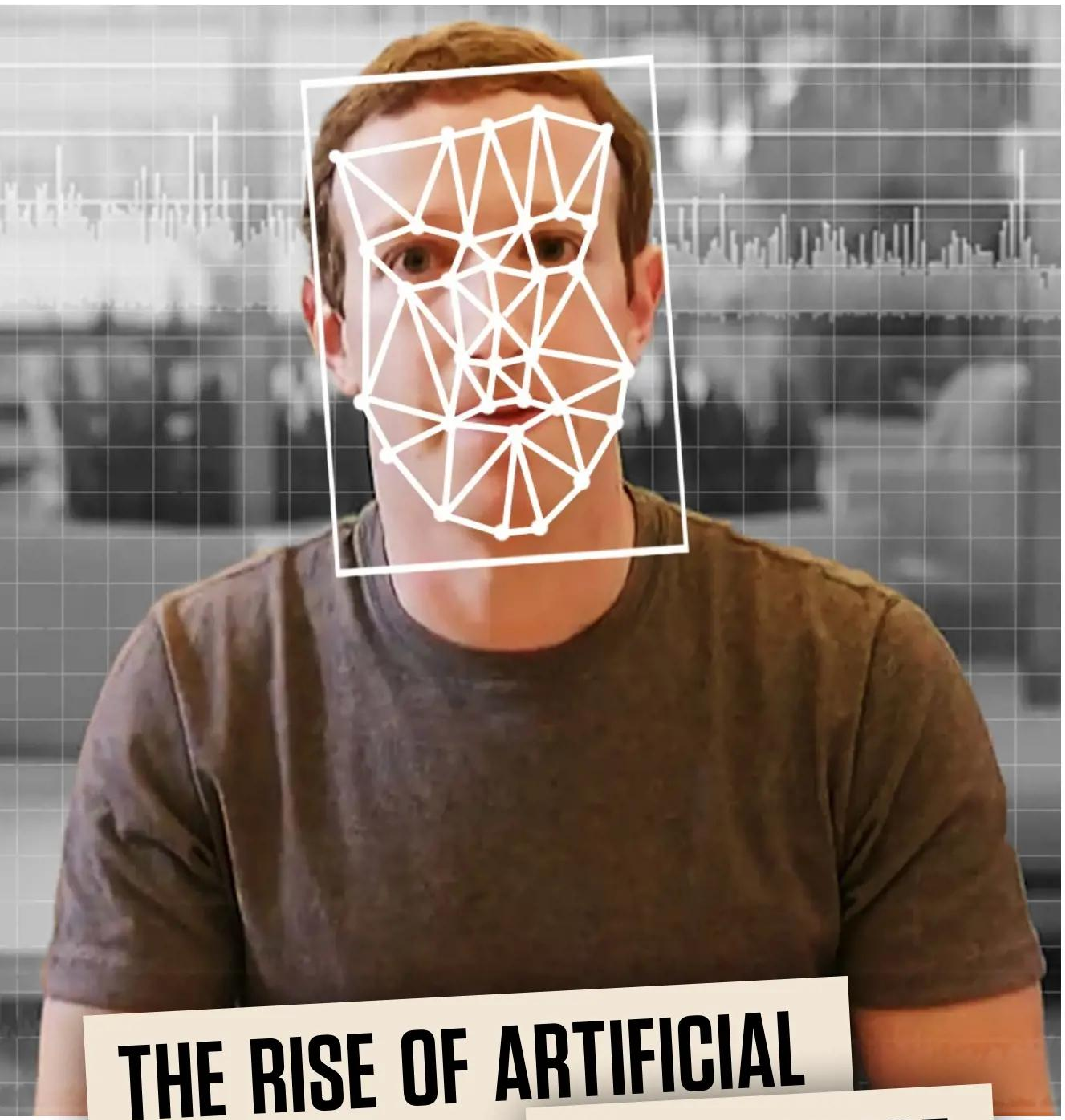
Research from the United Nations found that - as of 1 June 2024 - 26.9 per cent of elected parliamentarians worldwide are women and only 15 nations currently have female heads of government. At an executive level, 23 per cent of ministers are female and their most common role is to run departments for women, gender equality and family affairs.

While the electorate picks representatives in a democracy at the polls, getting on the ballot often involves historic processes such as combative hustings, which are seen to favour men. In 2022, the UK's Women and Equalities Committee noted that female-elected representatives often face "vicious misogynistic abuse", a situation exacerbated by the rise of social media. Meanwhile, debate about elected women commentating that parliaments don't work family-friendly hours are usually framed in terms of this being a complaint, rather than an urgent need.

Lower rates of female representation don't reflect the electorate. The Center for American Women and Politics found female voter registration has outranked male in every US presidential election since 1980. Yet in that time, just two women have been on the ballot for the White House. As of September 2024, the world's most famous democracy, the US, is yet to elect a female leader.


Kamala Harris became America's first female vice president, and could become the first female POTUS if she is victorious in the 2024 elections

Getty Images, Alamy



THE RISE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

In the run-up to the 2024 UK general election, voters in a crucial swing seat were shown a video of then prime minister, Rishi Sunak, discussing potential charges to see a GP. The recording looked, sounded and acted like the Conservative leader. But it was a 'deepfake', generated with artificial intelligence by Channel 4, as part of research on how media manipulation impacts voters. The danger to democracy is that others with more malign intentions were already doing the same and sharing it widely.

AI provides an unparalleled opportunity to create fake versions of politicians to attack or bolster electoral chances. The growing sophistication of technology enables material to be created quickly and cheaply. Research by the University of Pennsylvania found that people who consumed news on their phones were less likely to check its source and more likely to be convinced of authenticity by a large number of likes to a social media post.

Generative AI, taking input from a user and running it through a trained model to produce output, also makes it easier to create false text, photos and audio. As well as being used to target voters in the run-up to elections, it can be used to influence political narrative during administrations.

The growth of AI in the run-up to 2024, when 1.5 billion people around the world were expected to take part in elections, has been cited by a large number of academic institutions as one of the main threats to the democratic process.

AI technology has already been used to create widely shared deepfake videos of various politicians and business leaders, including Mark Zuckerberg (above)

DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS OF DEMOCRACY

Another of ancient Greece's gifts to the world, the Olympics, found itself at the centre of controversy around democracy in the summer of 2024. The birth of people power in France took centre stage at the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics but while Celine Dion sang from the Eiffel Tower, her French tribute drowned out complaints that the politician overseeing the spectacle was denying the democratic process.

Emmanel Macron's decision to call a snap parliamentary poll earlier in the summer had led to a bizarre seesaw of results between two extreme factions. The far-right National Front took the lead in the first round but the second, and decisive, poll saw a fragmentation of votes with the far-left edging ahead. President Macron put off naming a prime minister for weeks, citing the Olympics as one reason. His critics said he had taken power away from elected representatives.

In 2023, Spain faced a similar crisis when inconclusive elections led to stalemate. When the largest party couldn't form an administration, the country's king, Felipe VI, chose to ask the second largest grouping to try, despite calls for another poll. Some experts claimed the country's constitution could be interpreted several ways and in a country unable to choose, arguments over how democracy should work led to angry protests.

President Macron drew criticism for a two-month delay in appointing a prime minister after the 2024 elections

Will of the People ?
48%
WE ARE
ALSO
THE
PEOPLE
I AM THE
48%
OUR COUNTRY
OUR FUTURE
KINGDOM

Above: Close-run elections and political stalemates can lead to disagreements over what the most 'democratic' course of action is

Getty Images

VOTE
VOTE
VOTE
VOTE
VOTE
VOTE

A RIGHT TO VOTE, OR A DUTY?

Voting was never compulsory for citizens of ancient Greece but in the 5th century, playwright Aristophanes wrote of the dangers of low turnout in democratic elections. He described people being dragged to the ballots to ensure representation. Fast-forward 2,500 years and voting is mandatory for Greek citizens while other nations debate whether compulsory participation in elections is needed for democracy to survive the threat of voter apathy.

An investigation into voting habits by the universities of Essex and Montreal in 2021 found that election turnouts had dropped by an average of 10 per cent globally since the 1960s. Academics argue that this leads to a decline in democracy as politicians don't feel they are being held to account at the polls, leading to more autocratic actions once in power. However, opponents of mandatory voting argue it can impact engagement and can leave people open to coercion or bribery.

In 1970, the Netherlands dropped compulsory voting with a subsequent dip in turnout. However, it continues to score highly on the Freedom Index, which is compiled every year to show the state of electoral and civil liberties in countries around the world.

As of 2024, there are 23 countries in the world with compulsory voting, but only a few, including Australia and Belgium, issue fines for non-participation. But as active election participation continues to fall, there are concerns that this enables extreme political factions to thrive at the ballot. Meanwhile, the latest EU elections in Greece saw anyone over the age of 70 excused from the ballot if they couldn't make it to the polling station, leading to debate about a two-tier approach between generations over the importance of voting for a democracy.

THE S.L.S.A. AUSTRALIA 1931-32 CHAMPIONSHIP
THE S.L.S.A. AUSTRALIA 1934-35 PREMIERS BON S.L.S.C
SURF RESCUE
SURF RESCU
BOND

Compulsory voting in Australia has led to the country having one of the highest turnouts in the world, typically around 90%

SURF
RESCUE
BONDI
ROYAL COMMAND SURF CARNIVAL

WHO MATTERS MOST – YOUNG OR OLD?

The US Democratic Party's colour is blue, but when Kamala Harris began her presidential campaign, she turned her social media brat green. It was a nod to Charli XCX, who had just declared that Harris was "brat", the name of her album as well the vibe of the summer of 2024 – and represented by neon green.

It was a media moment that seemed to give Harris the edge with young voters but how much help that would be at the polls was debatable. Global studies of voting patterns have regularly found younger citizens less likely to vote.

Parliamentary research ahead of the 2024 UK polls found that voter turnout among those aged 65 and over had been at least 20 percentage points higher than that of 18-24 year olds in every election since 1997. While younger people are more likely to join campaigns or sign petitions, they are less likely to actually choose who governs them.

This has led to fears of so-called ageing democracies, where politicians appeal to those they think can deliver power through actual votes at the ballot box rather than to all generations who can cast ballots, meaning issues that matter to young people are ignored. An investigation by the University of California found under 25s were less likely to vote as they felt current leaders couldn't address the issues that matter to them, which generates a vicious circle of disengagement.

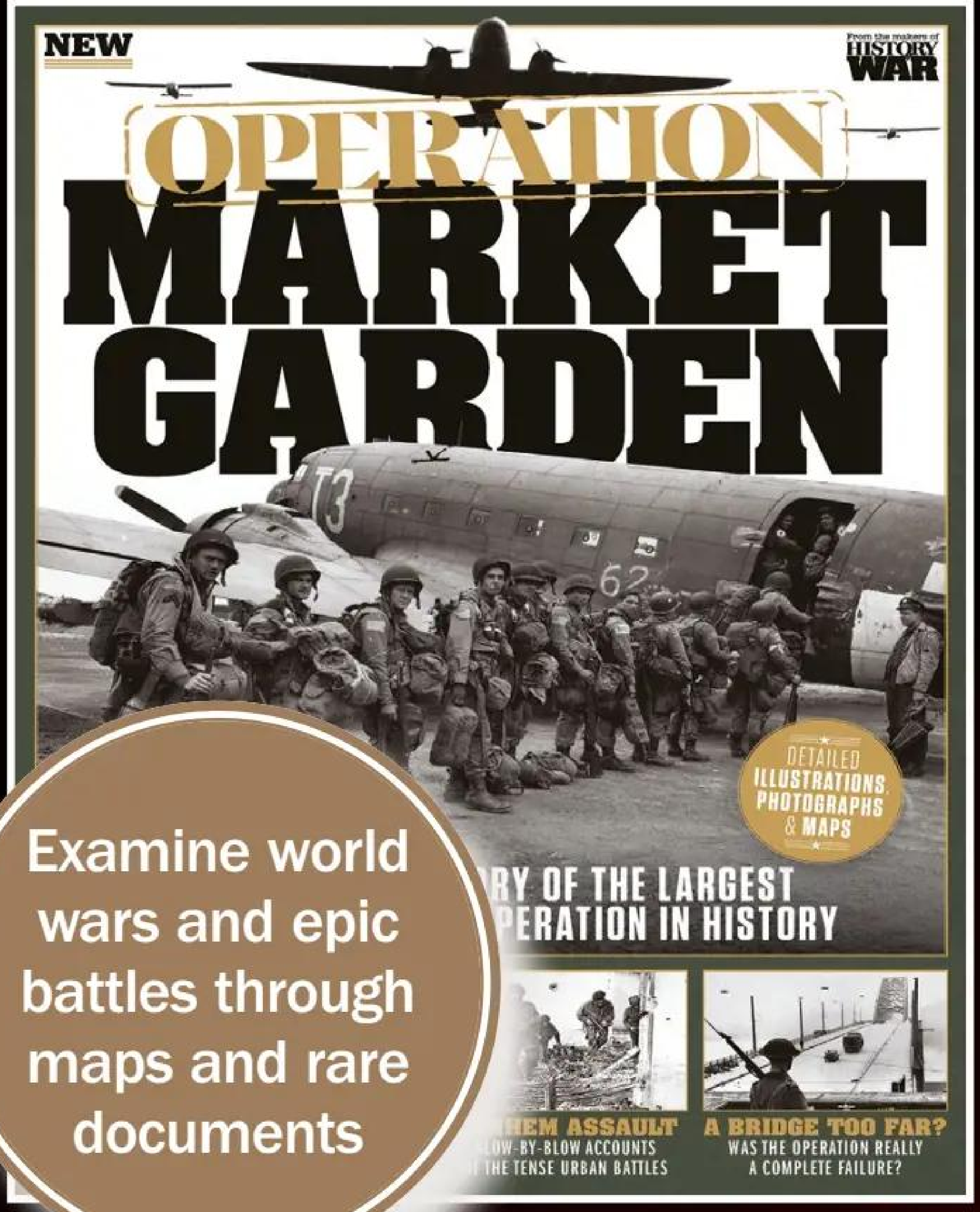
In 1969, Labour reduced the UK voting age to 18, and 16 year olds have been able to vote in Scottish elections since 2014. Now, there are calls for a fresh drop in the age limit throughout Western countries to encourage teenagers to get involved with democracy, amid fears that an ageing electorate is damaging engagement.

Left inset: Turnout is typically higher among older voters; compulsory voting could help increase engagement among younger generations

Below: Kamala Harris' campaign embraced the 'brat summer' viral trend in an effort to reach young voters

KAMALA IS BRAT
KAMALA
HARRIS WALZ
ALL for ONE & ONE
KODAK

Getty Images, Alamy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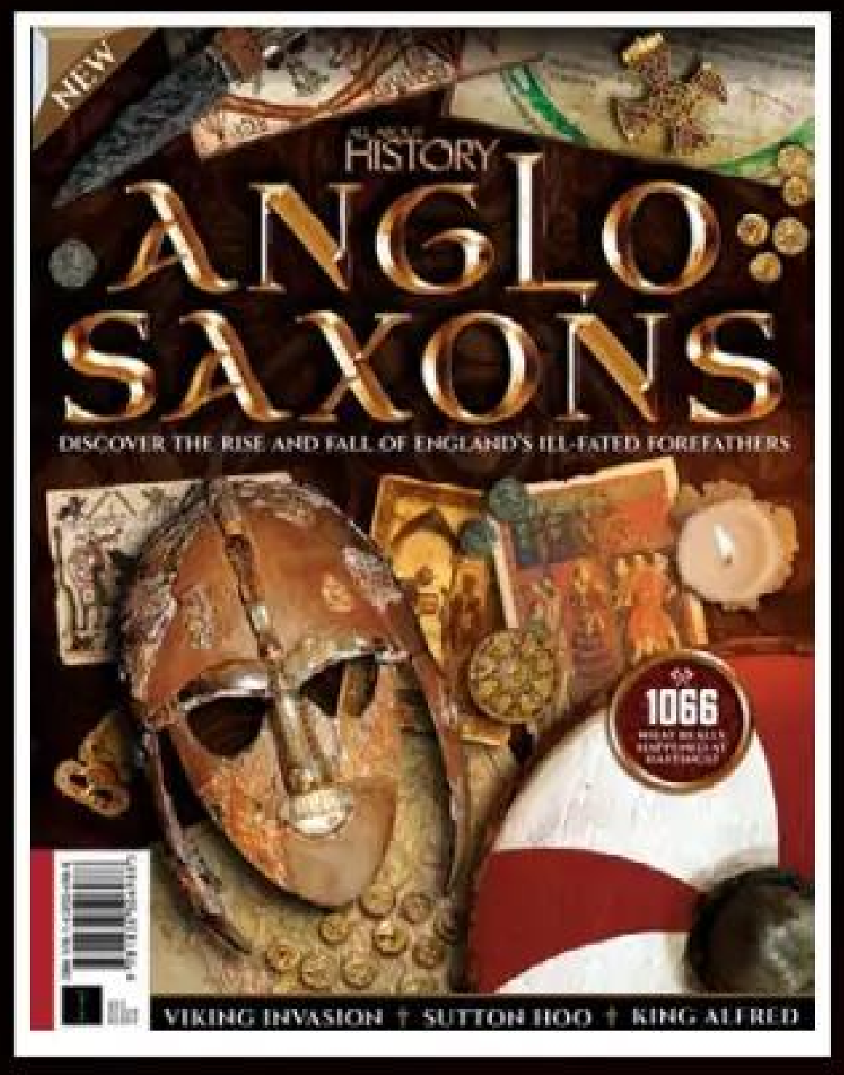
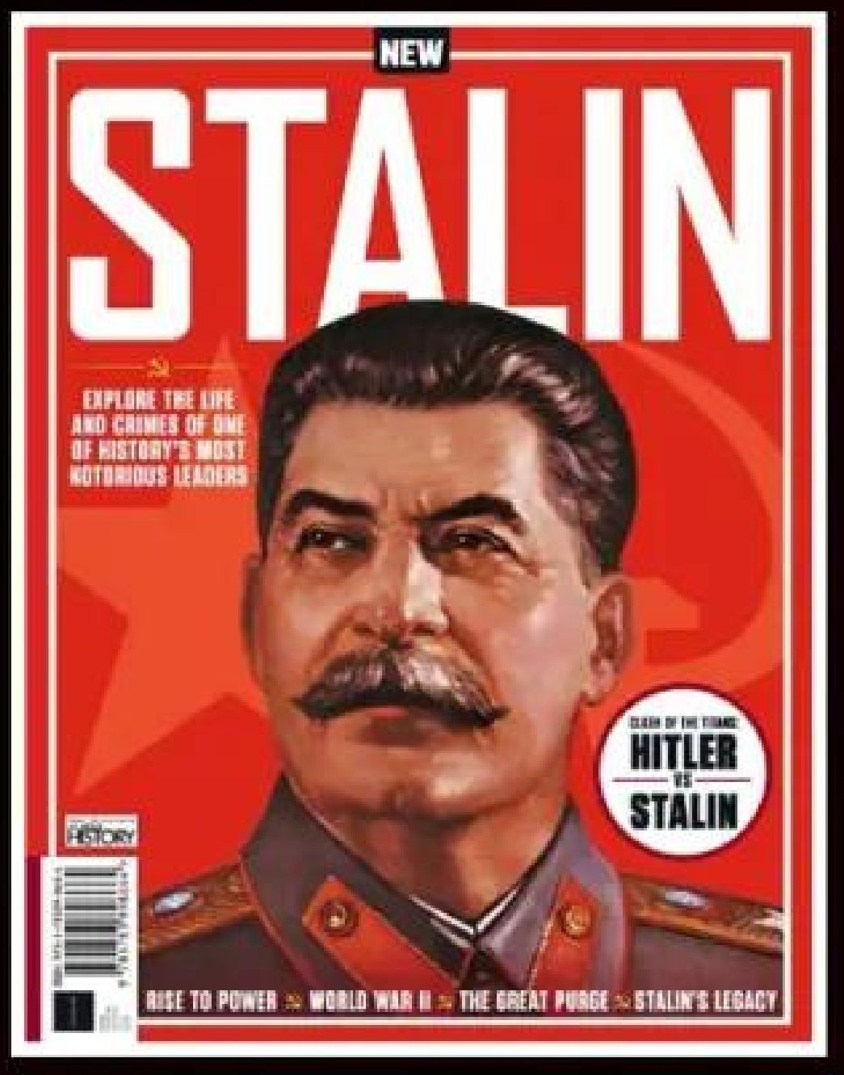

ANGLO-SAXONS

WAR • EMPIRE • POWER • LOVE
GREATEST QUEENS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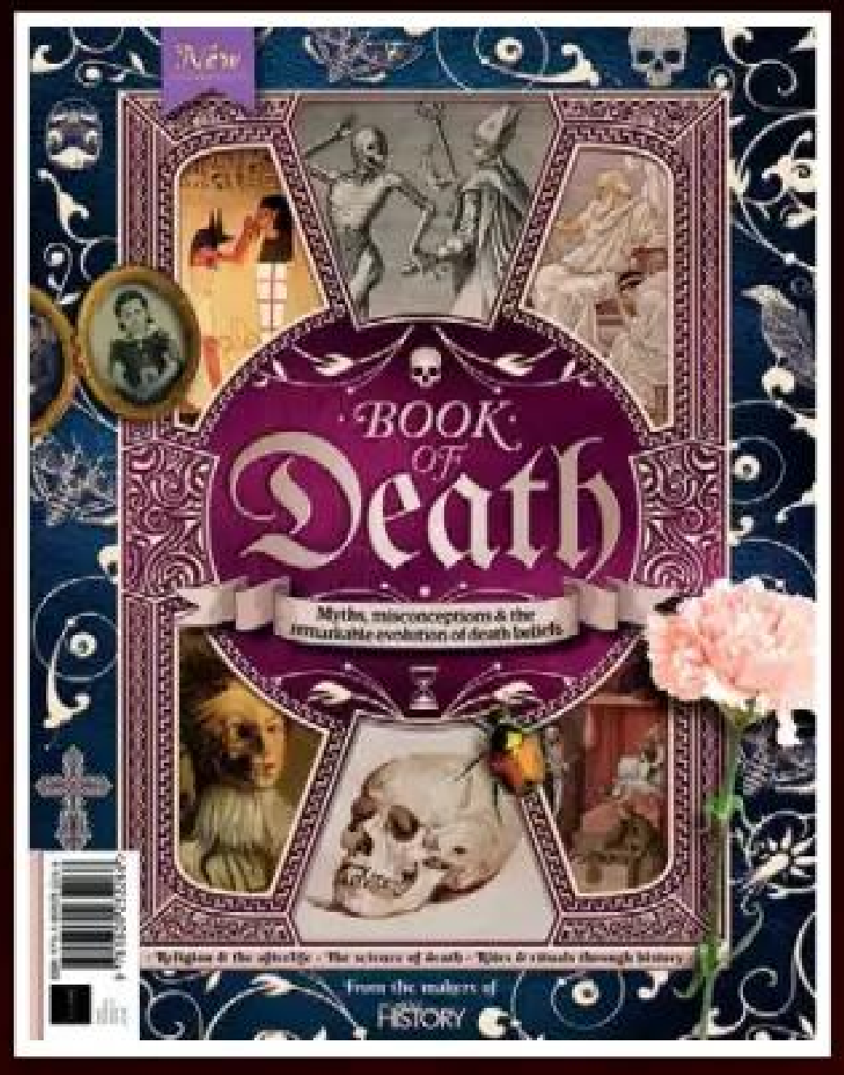
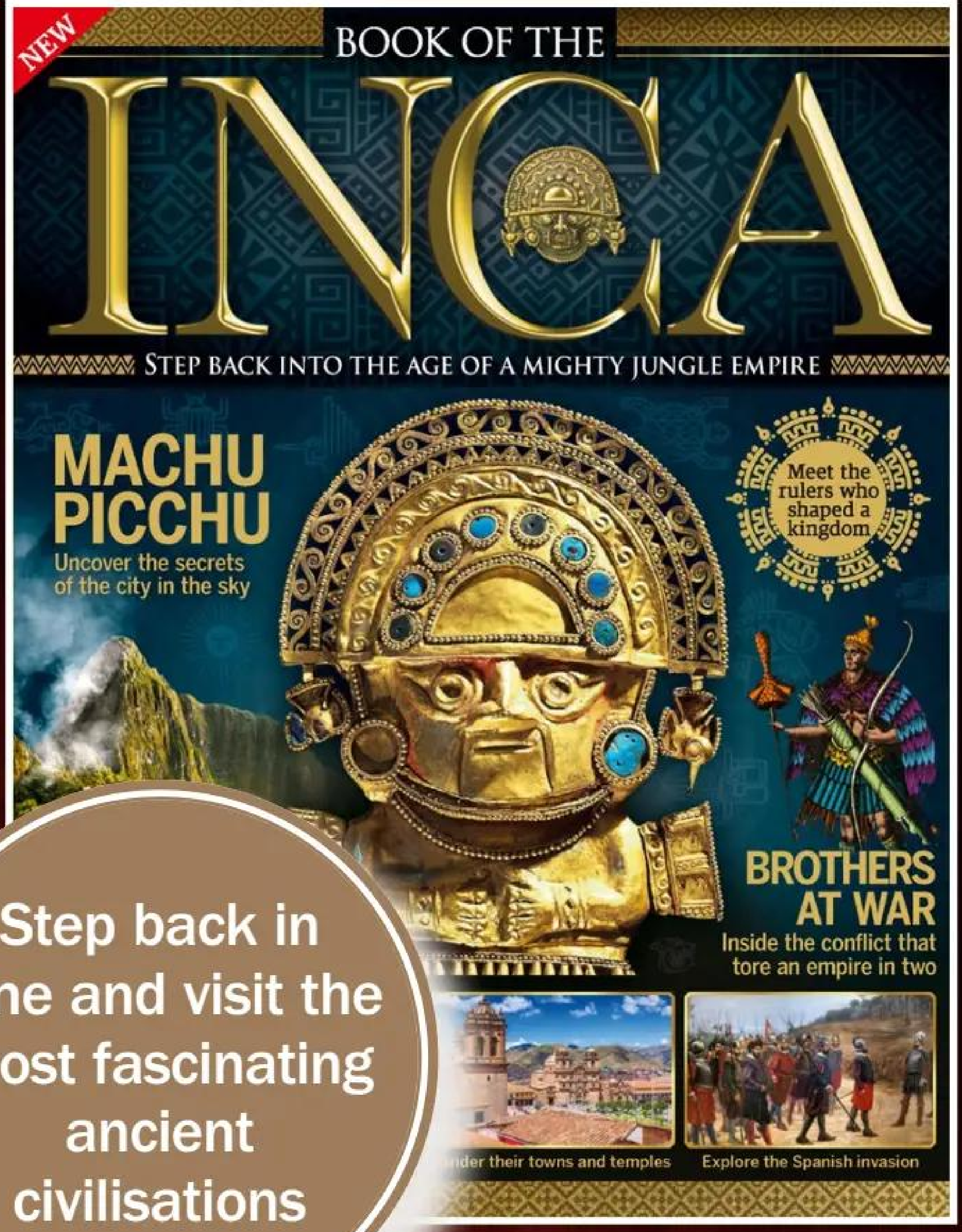
HITLER vs STALIN


BOOK OF Death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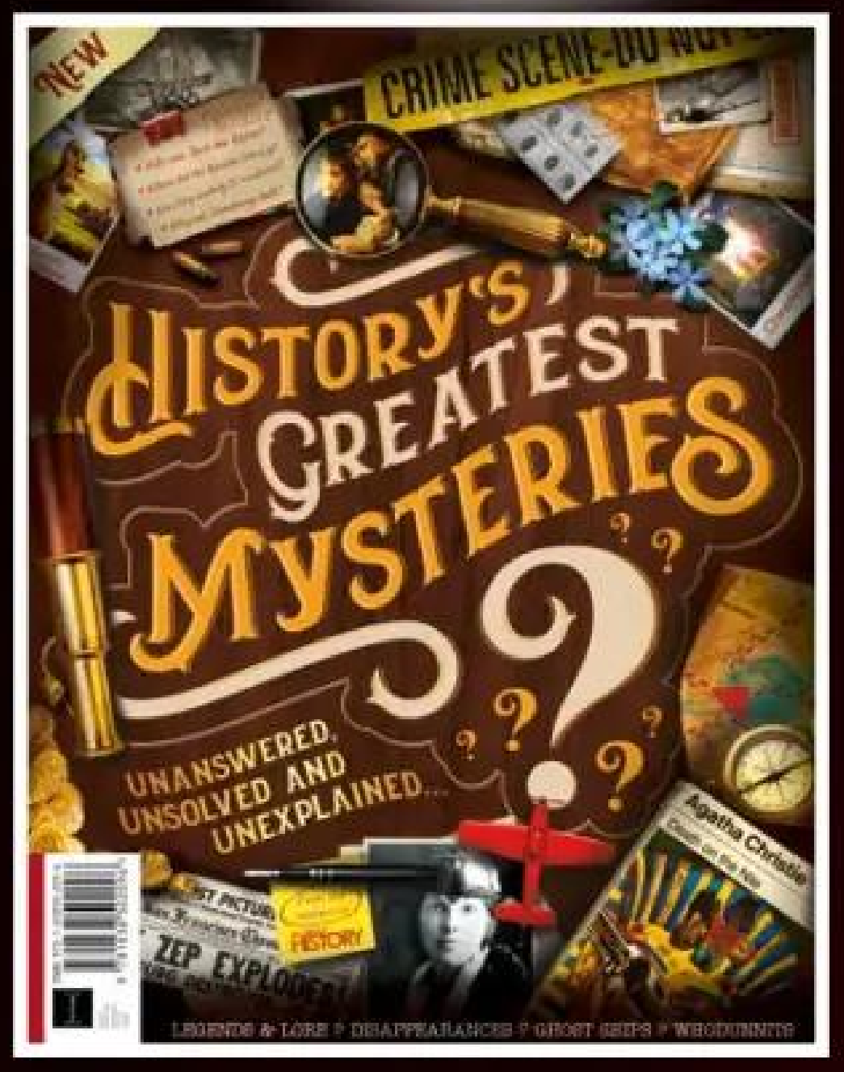
Inside the conflict that tore an empire in two
Explore the Spanish invasion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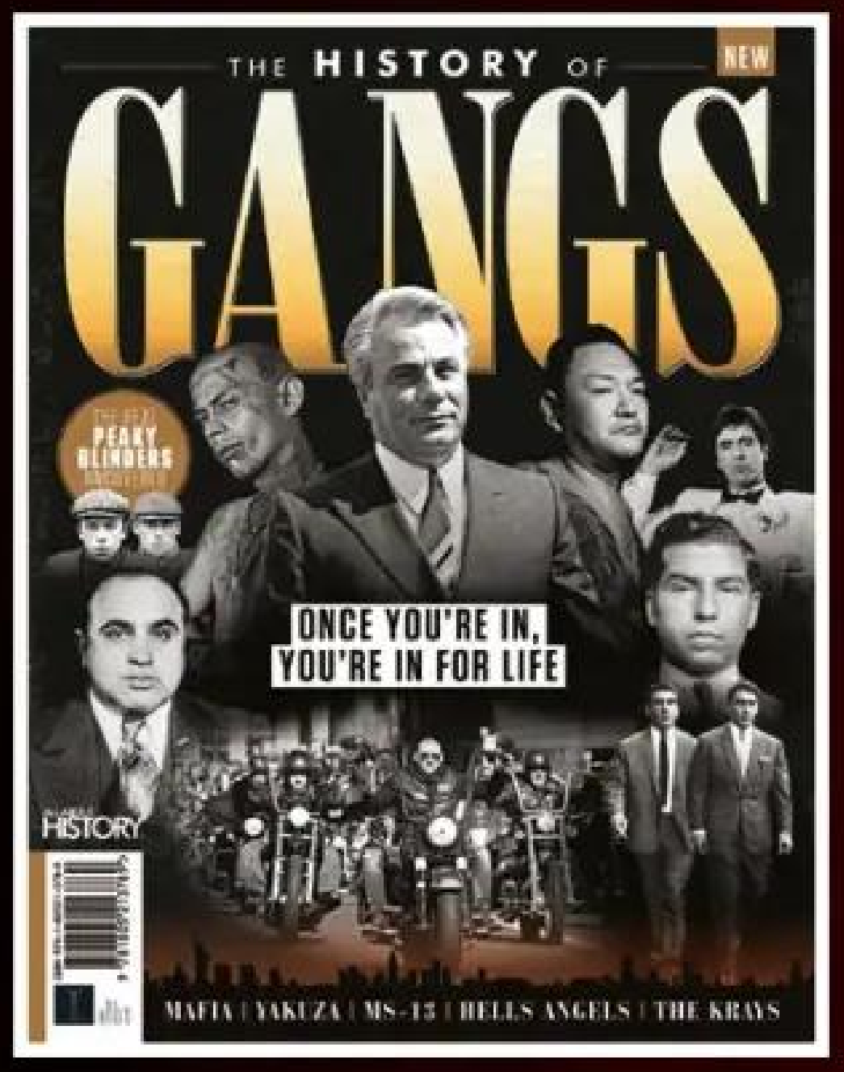
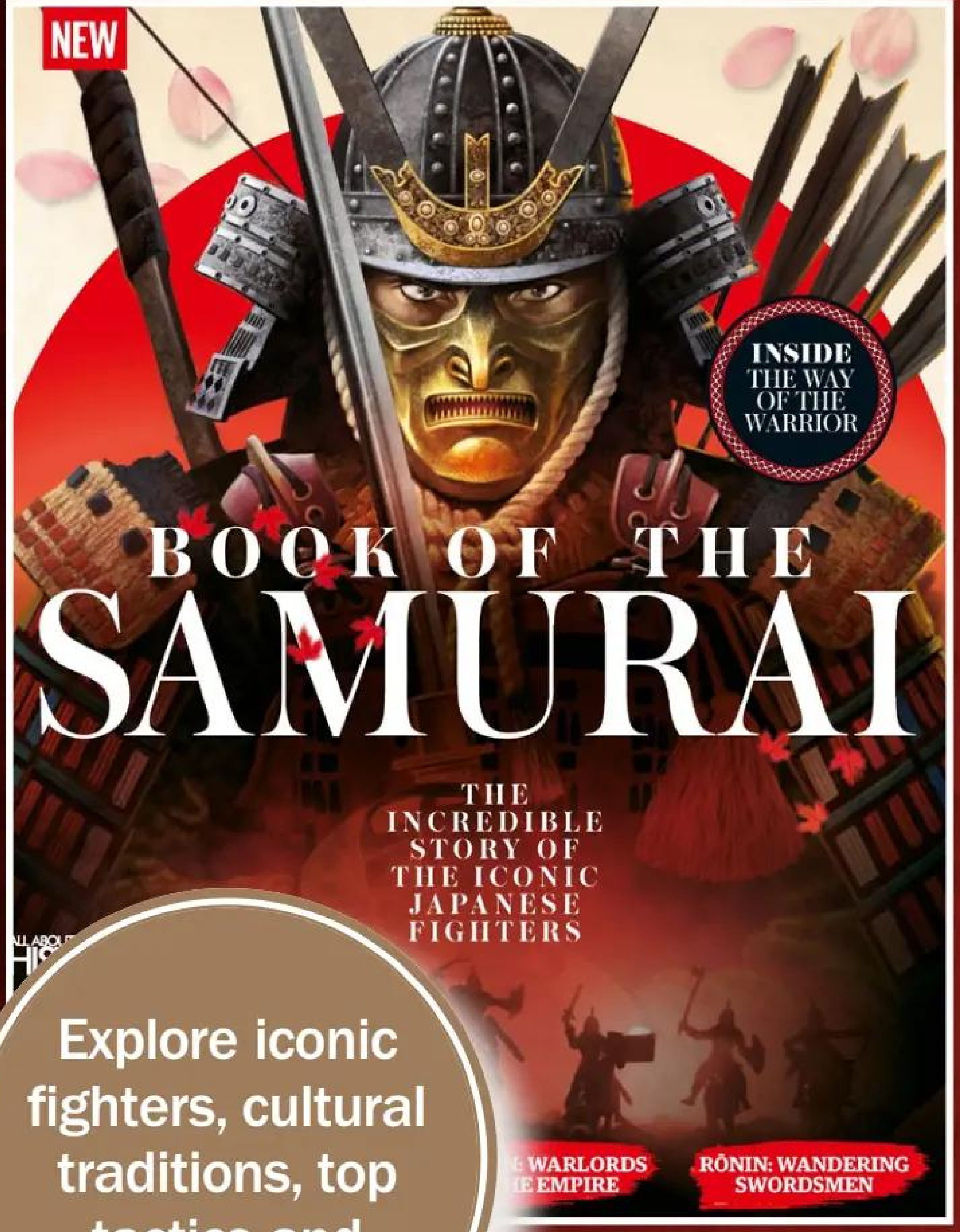

THE HISTORY OF
GANGS
ONCE YOU'RE IN, YOU'RE IN FOR LIFE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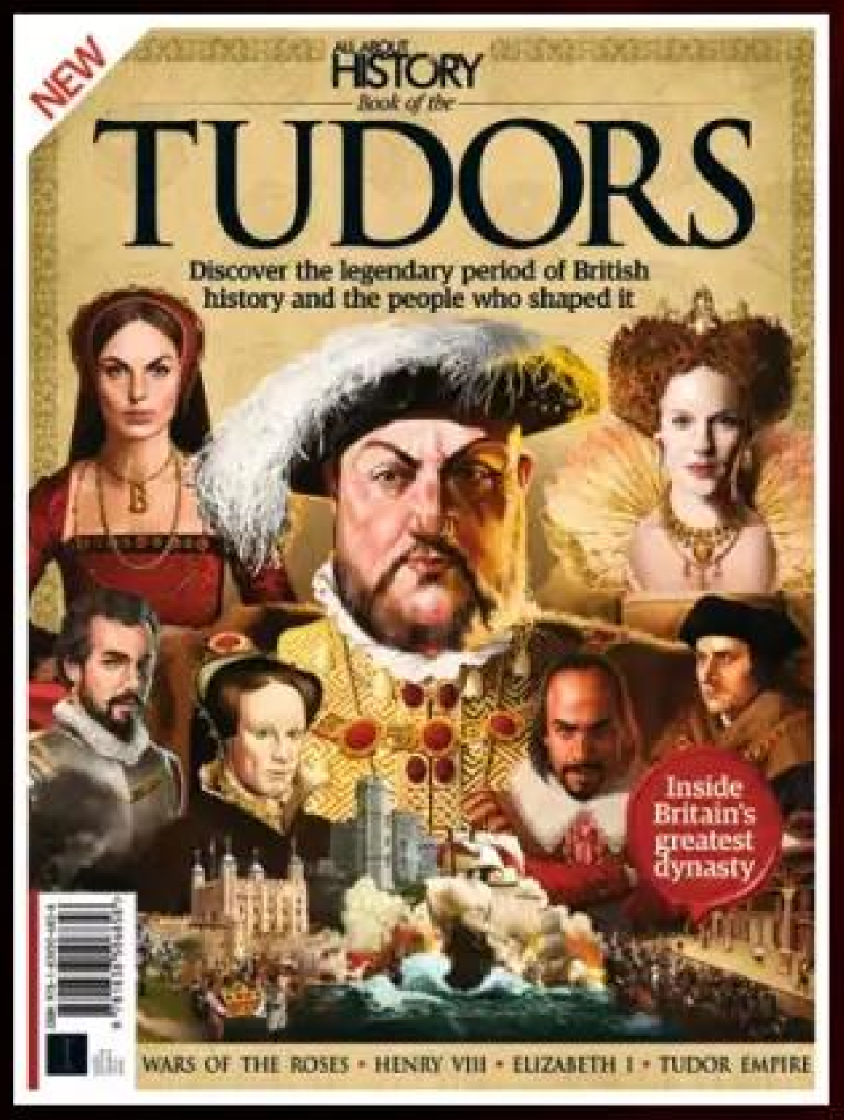
DARK AGES?
HORDES & HOARDS
AGE OF CHIVALRY

NEW
DARK HISTORY



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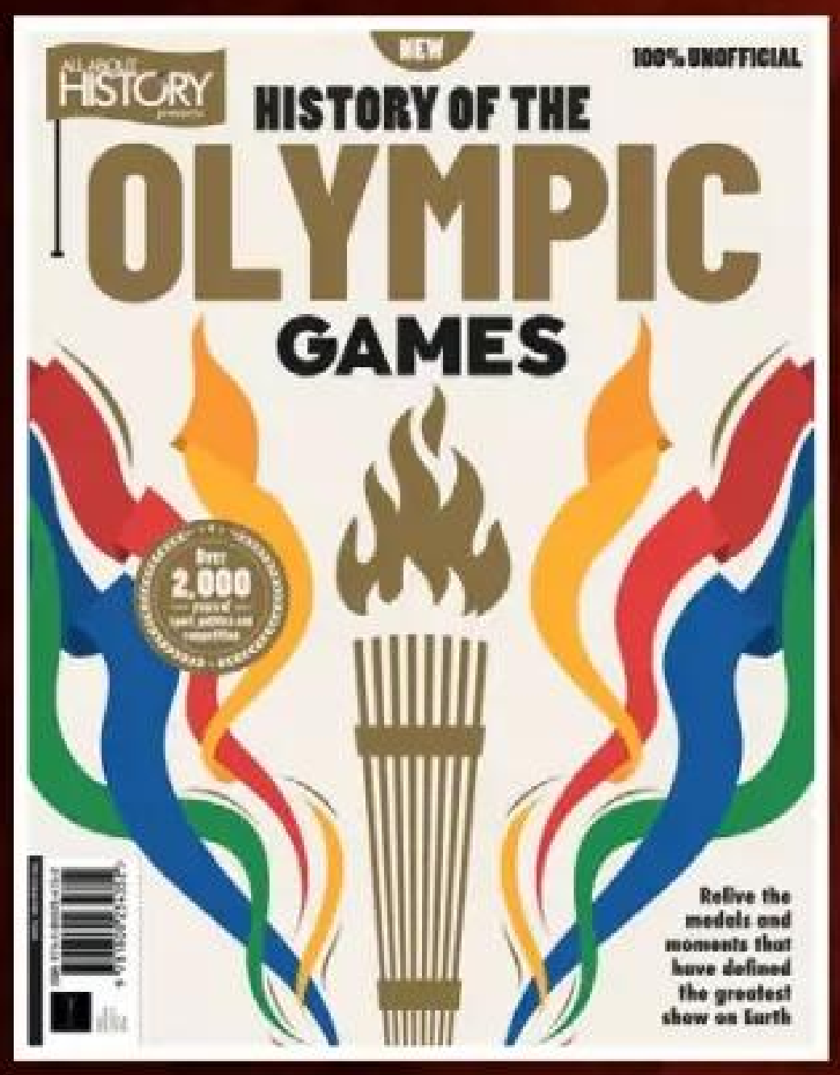
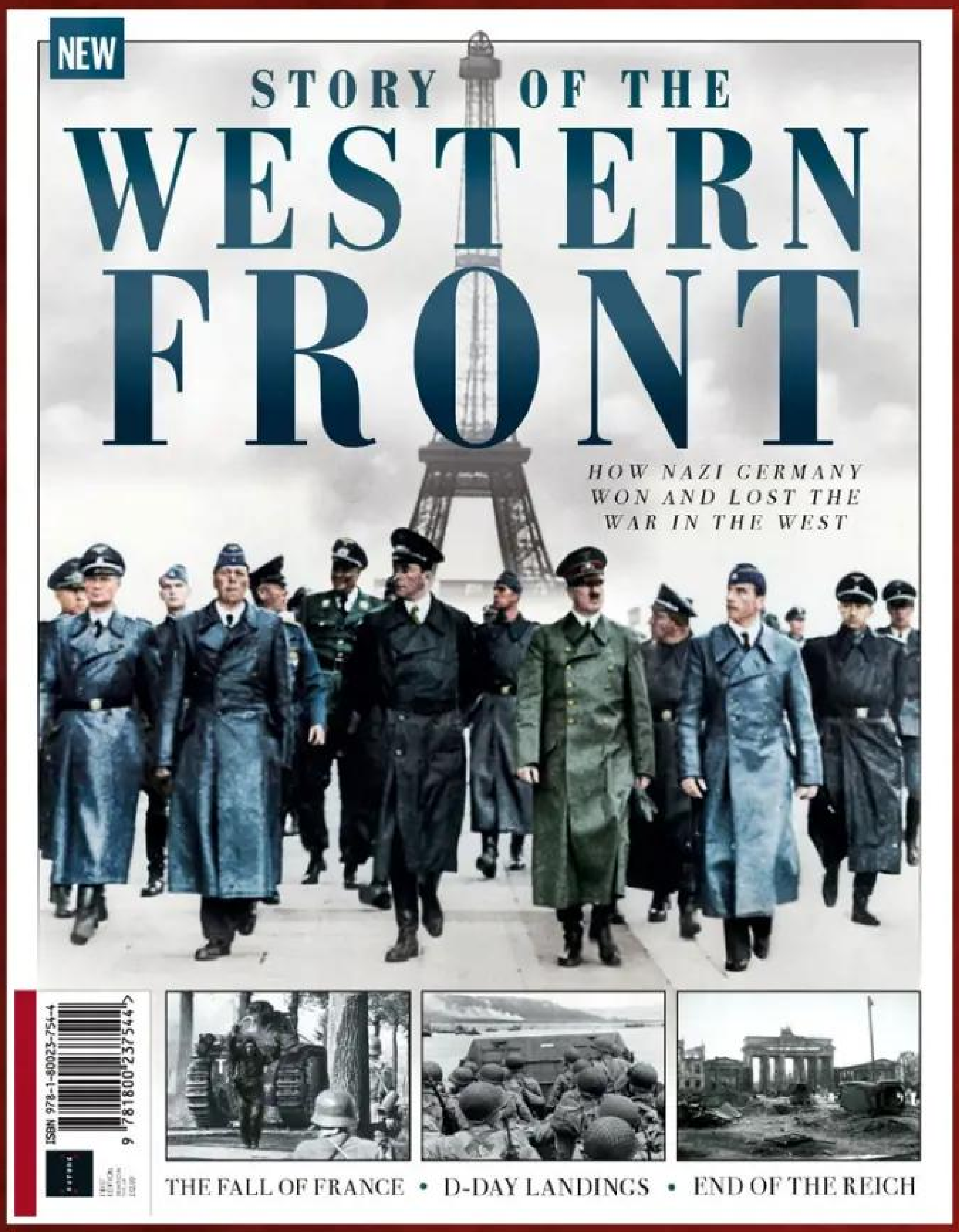

HISTORY OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES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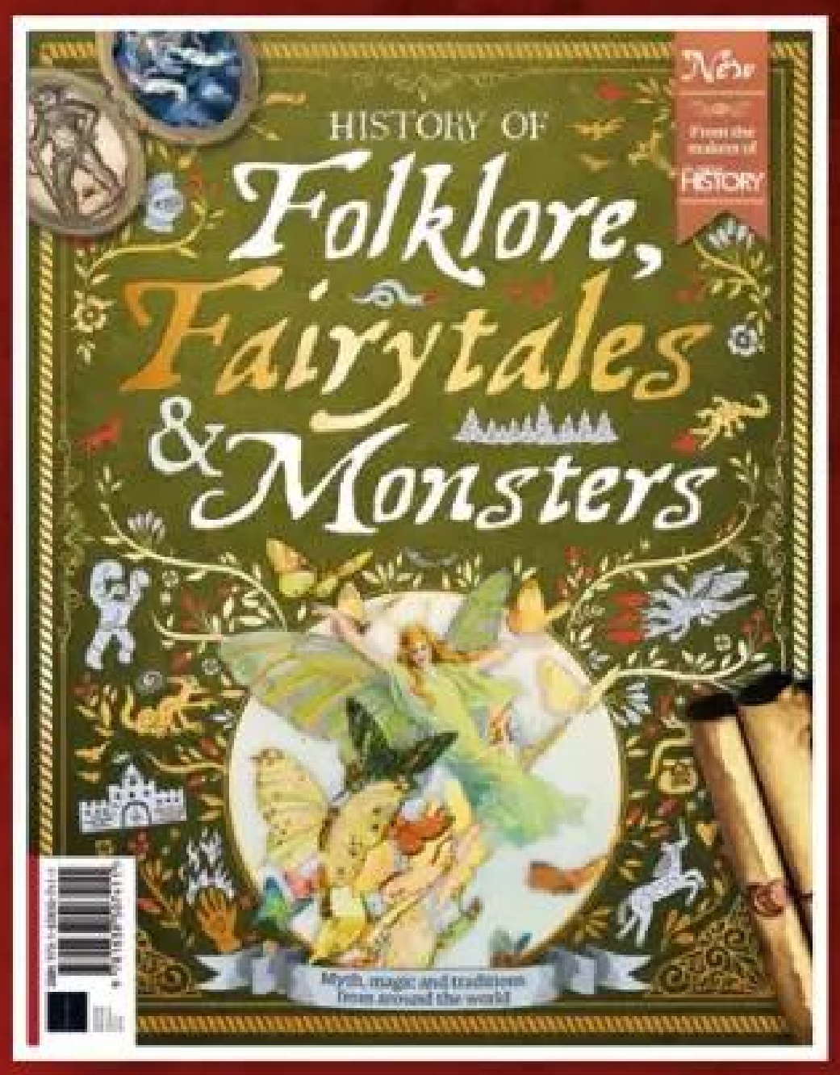
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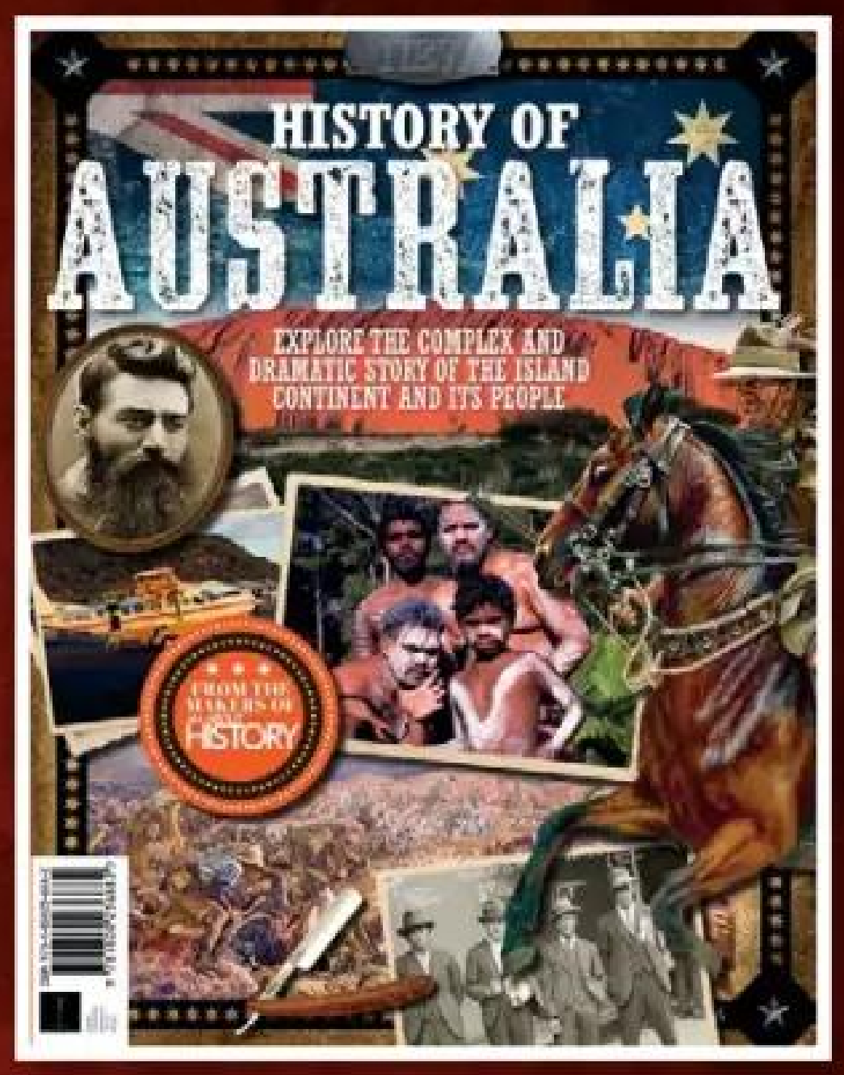
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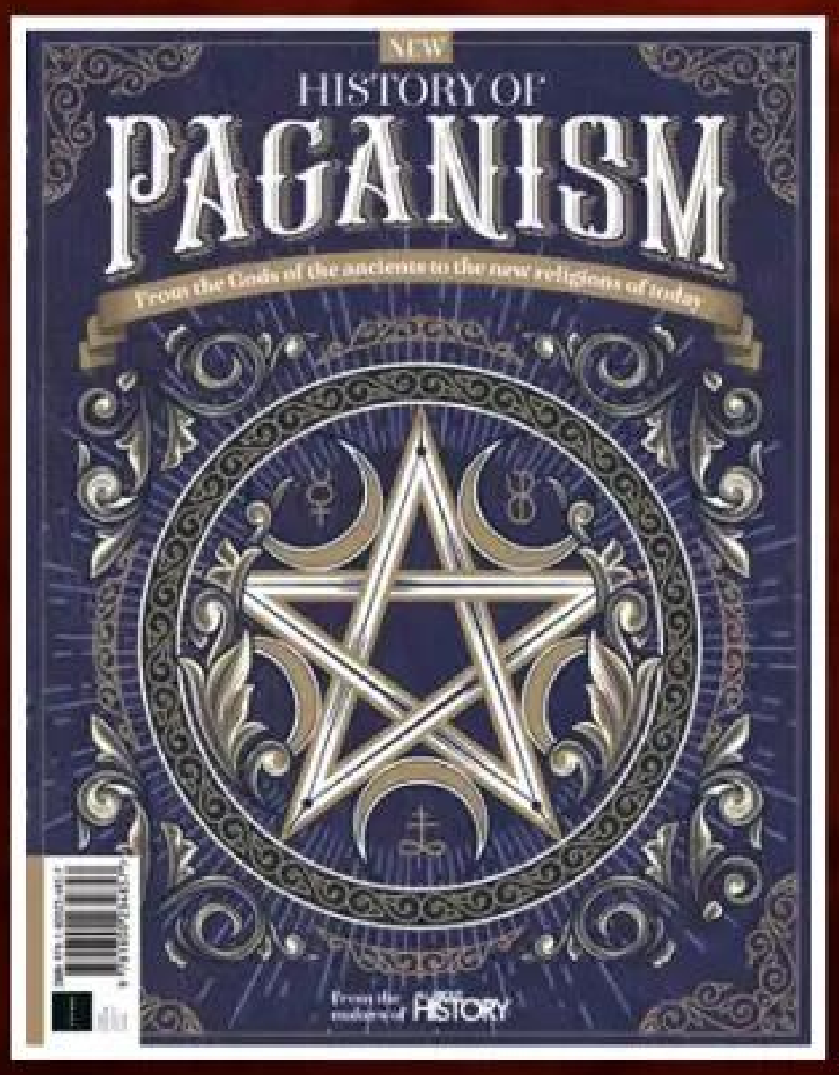
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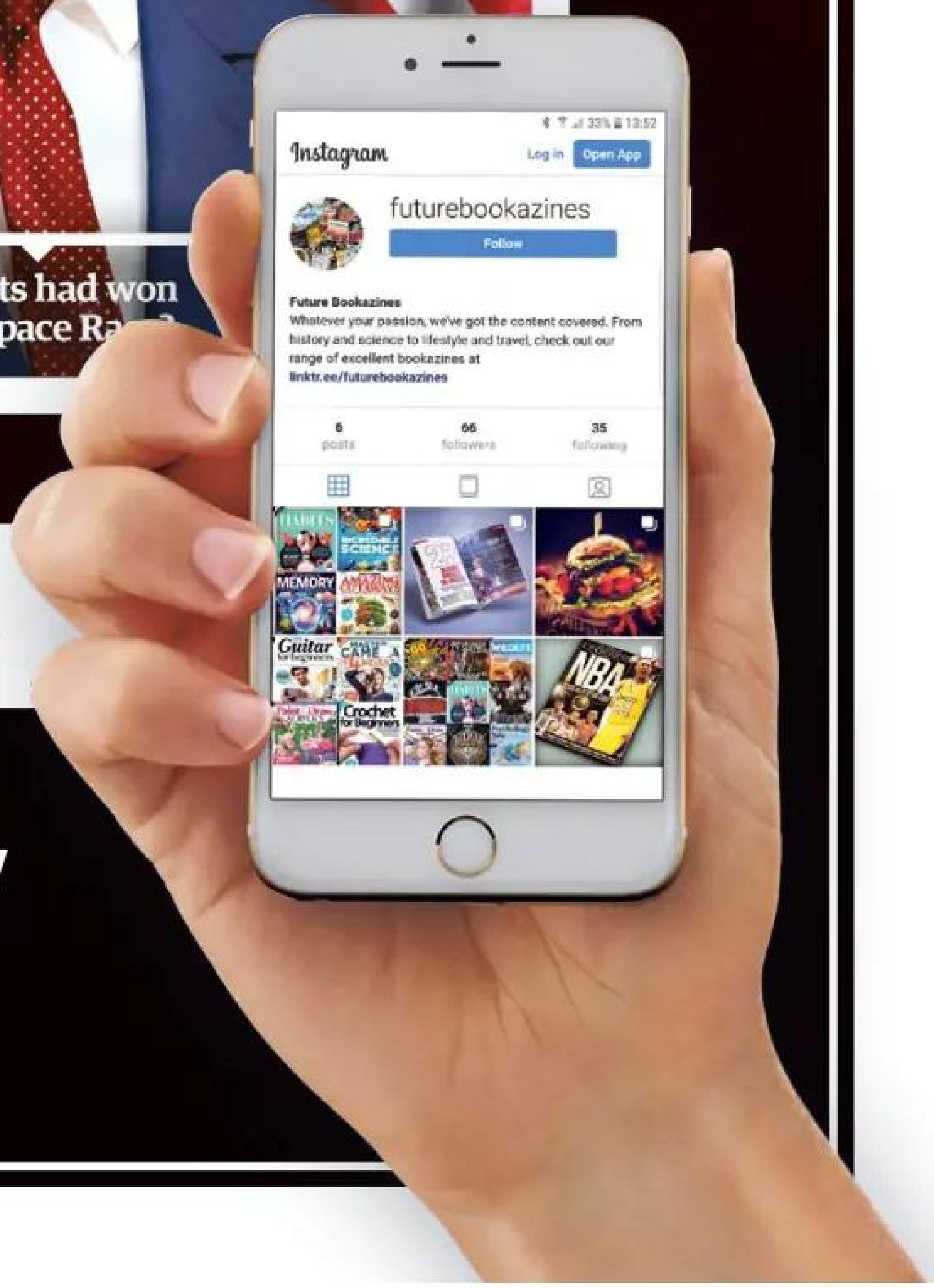
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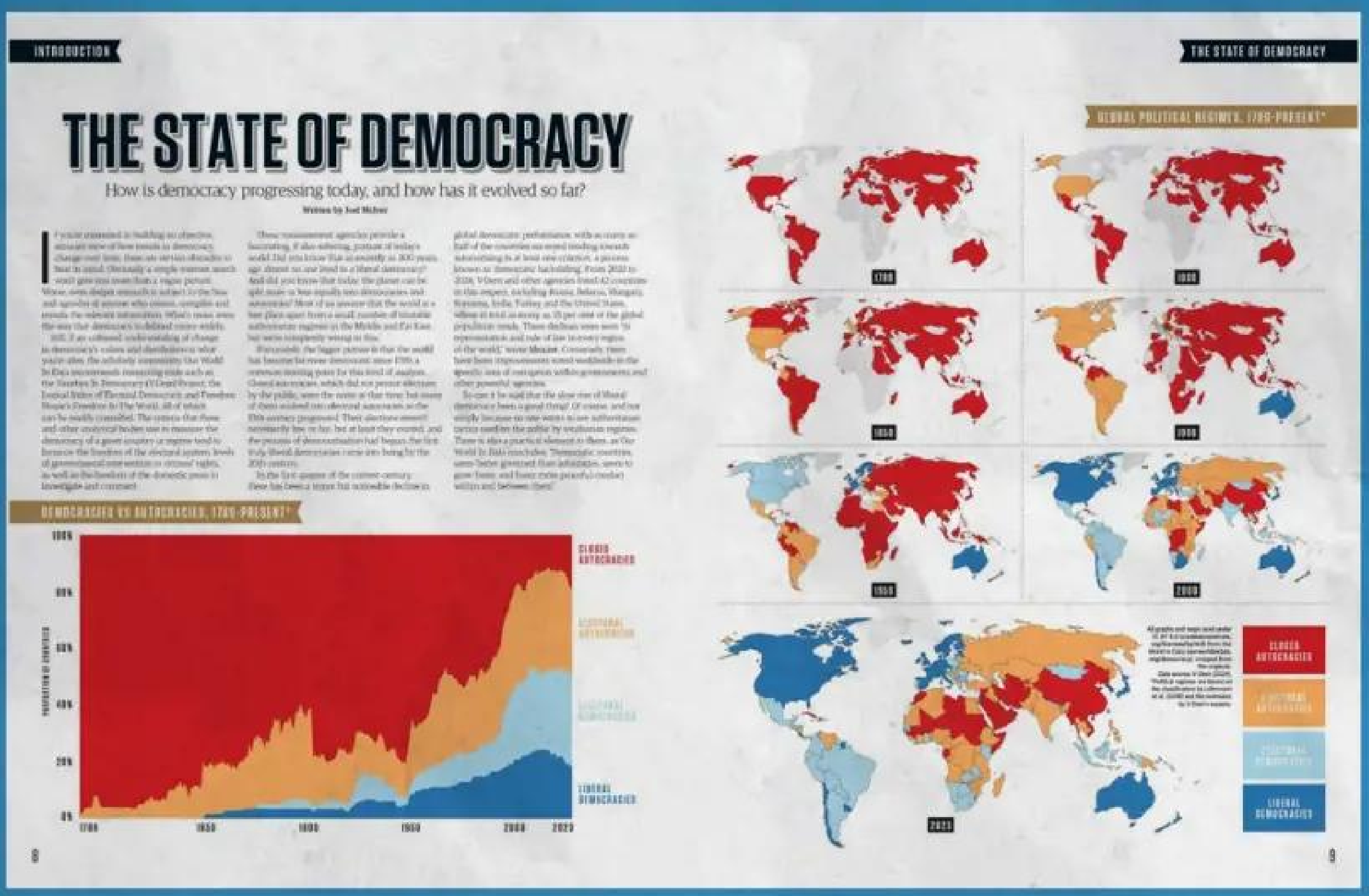
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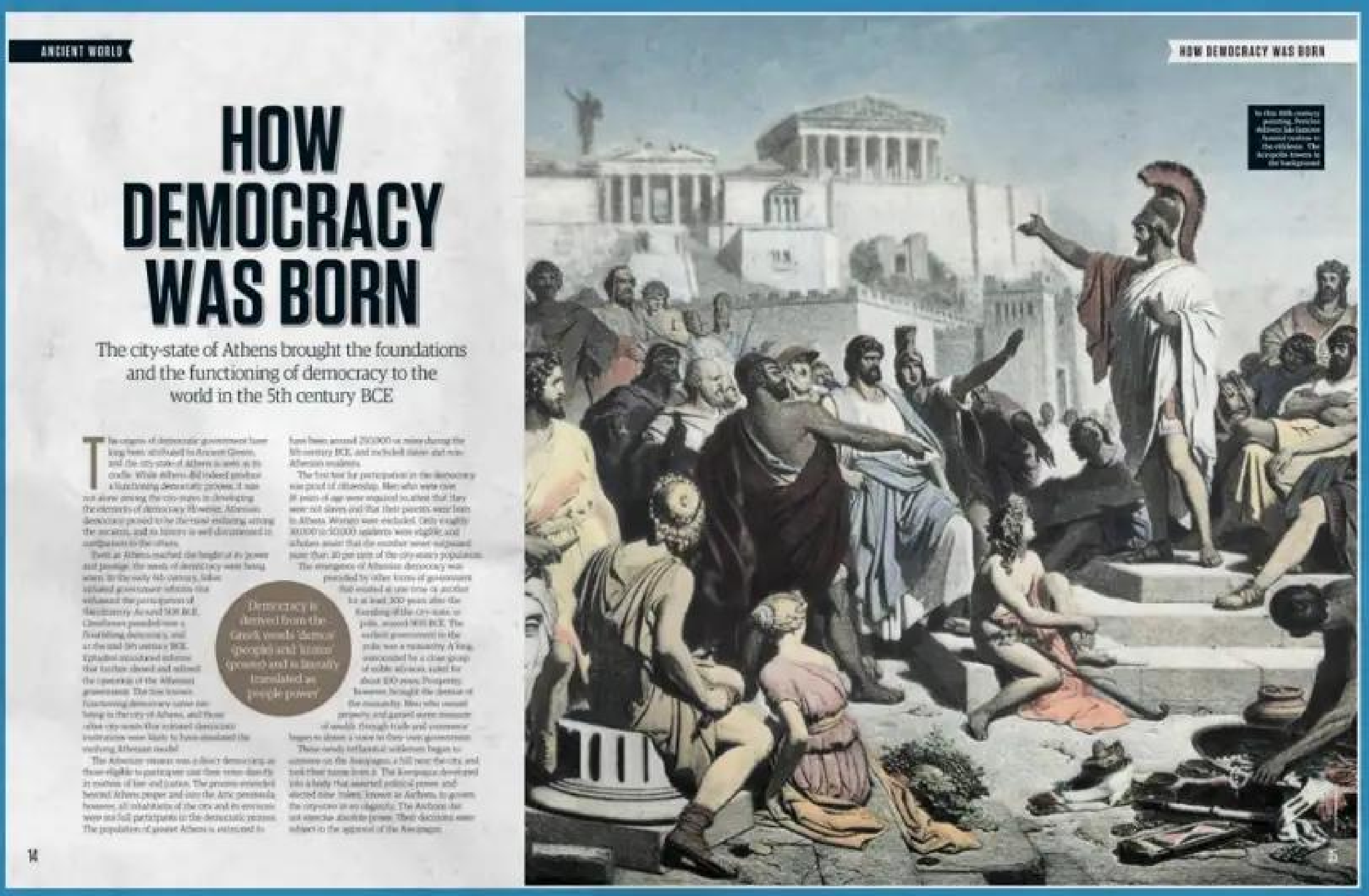
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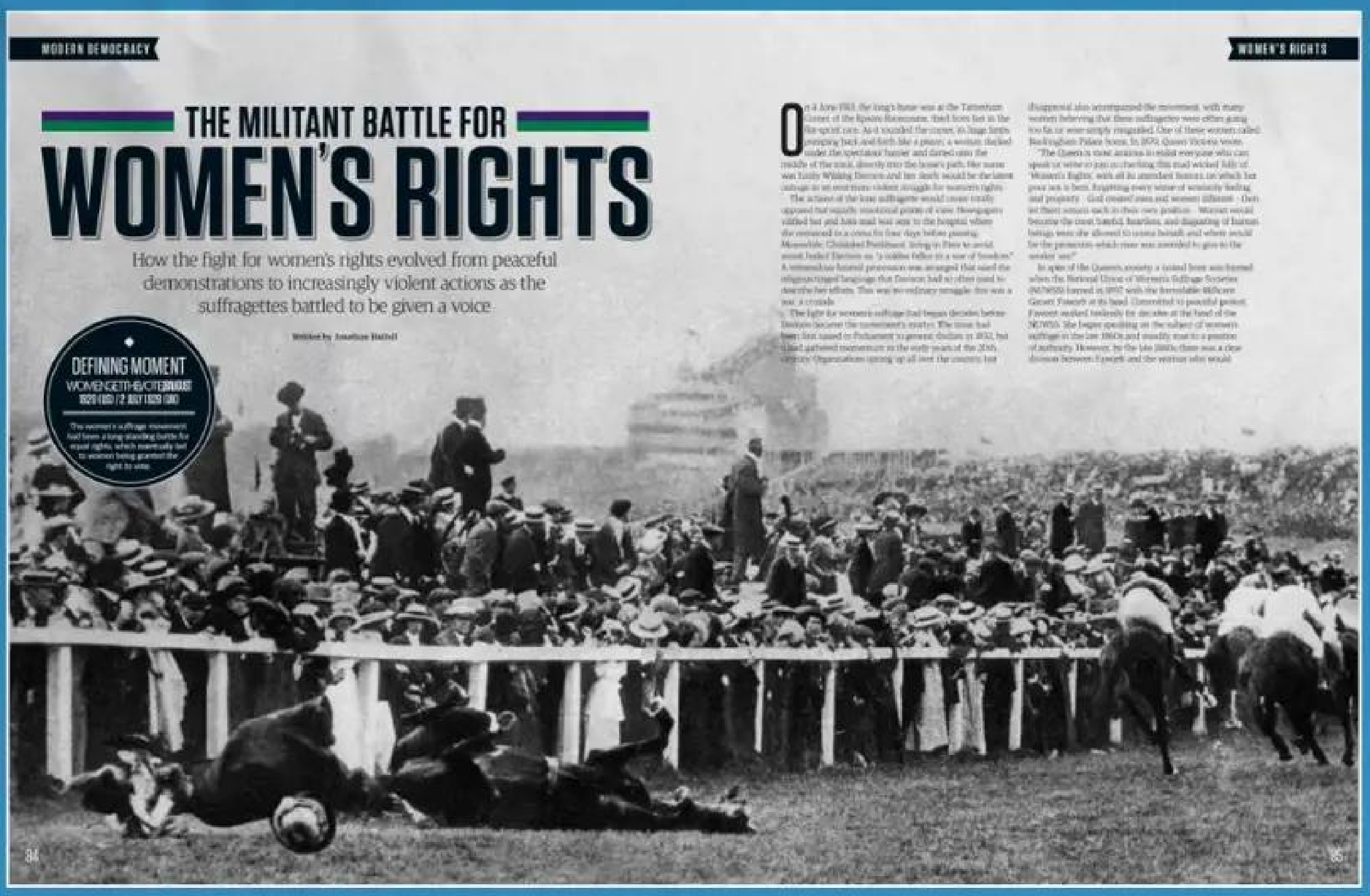
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